

A TARNISHED EAGLE; NAPOLEON'S WINTER CAMPAIGN IN POLAND,  
DECEMBER 1806 THROUGH FEBRUARY 1807

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## ABSTRACT

A TARNISHED EAGLE NAPOLEON'S WINTER CAMPAIGN IN POLAND  
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pages.

The victories and accomplishments of Napoleon and his Grand Army were by the winter of 1806, the stuff of legend. Yet, on the bloody field of Eylau, Napoleon lost both his prestige and over one third of his Army. How did this Russian Army of notable inferior weapons, tactics, organization and leadership stave off defeat and almost achieve victory? The answer lies in that Napoleon did not only fight the Russians, but also suffered a combination of poor morale and inaccurate reconnaissance. His overextended lines of communications covered an area that was known for its harsh terrain, poor supplies and extremely bad weather.

The Campaign cost Napoleon over 43,000 casualties and proved indecisive. The campaign, and Battle of Eylau, ruined Napoleon's image of invincibility and completely gutted the Grand Army of a wealth of leadership and experience. Over twenty general officers were killed or seriously wounded at Eylau. Subsequently, Napoleon would have to consistently rely on more conscripts and an ever-increasing number of foreign troops to fill his depleted ranks. Napoleon's Army would never again resemble the previously invincible Grand Army that died on the blood-soaked snows of Poland.

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## CHAPTER 1

### FOOTSTEPS TO POLAND

Since 1796 Napoleon had dominated the battlefields of Europe. The victories and accomplishments of Napoleon and his Grand Army were, by the winter of 1806, the stuff of legend. Yet, on the bloody field of Eylau, Napoleon lost both his prestige and over one third of his Army. The Battle of Eylau, fought on 7 and 8 February 1807, cost Napoleon 25,000 casualties and proved indecisive. The battle ruined Napoleon's image of invincibility and completely gutted the Grand Army of a wealth of leadership and experience. The battle was the culmination of a campaign that is memorable for its striking inefficiencies in not only the Grand Army, but the Napoleonic system of warfare as well. A study of Napoleon's Campaign in Poland during the winter of 1806-1807 is significant because it offers an insight into many of the problems Napoleon would again face in the disastrous Russian Campaign in 1812. How did this Russian army of notable inferior weapons, tactics, organization and leadership stave off defeat and almost achieve victory? Were the first tarnishes beginning to appear on the Grand Army's Imperial Eagles as early as the winter of 1806–1807?

#### Introduction

Most historians consider Napoleon's career a series of unbroken successes until at least the Treaty of Tilsit in July of 1807. Some historians extend this timeframe and do not see any weakness in Napoleon's military machine until his first major loss at Asprinsling in 1809. Still others do not see any serious prestige damage to the Napoleonic myth of invincibility until his disastrous retreat from Russia in the winter of 1812. The

result, by most contemporary and modern Napoleonic historians, is an underwriting of Napoleon's first serious reversal.

The last book written in English on Napoleon's Winter Campaign in Poland was by Frank L. Petre in 1901, more than 100 years ago. Much of the history written since 1810 is based on very biased and inaccurate French documentation. Napoleon went to great lengths to convince his growing Empire and the people of France that events in Poland in the winter of 1806-07 went as planned, if not better. He intentionally misrepresented events in the field to cover up serious errors in his own judgement, the weakening of his Grand Army, and the precarious political situation he found himself in after the battle. His spring recovery and crushing victory over the Russians in June of 1807, at the Battle of Friedland, helped to cover earlier mistakes. Unfortunately, for most military historians, this also results in a general glossing over of the earlier, almost destructive Winter Campaign culminating in the Battle of Eylau.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will attempt to provide a new analysis on why Napoleon's undefeated Grand Army, arguably the most experienced army he would ever command, was unable to tie down and defeat an inferior Russian Army during the winter of 1806-1807. The short answer to this is that the Grand Army was exhausted, morale was low and a key aspect of Napoleon's system of warfare, that of living off the land, failed for the first time in the empty reaches of Poland. Because of this, the Russians were able to fight their way out of Napoleon's encircling attack around Pultusk in December of 1806. They were able to continue this unpopular campaign and escape Napoleon's well-planned trap again, in January of 1807. Then, after almost a week of constant rear guard actions, the Russians were able to turn and face Napoleon with superior numbers at Eylau on 7 February 1807.



Napoleon was for the first time caught off balance and, due to the very successful rear guard actions of the Russians, was unable to gather significant forces on the field of battle for the decisive action. The result of the Battle of Eylau, and the winter campaign in Poland, was the destruction of Napoleon's Grand Army. Napoleon's Army would never again resemble the previously invincible Grand Army that died on the blood-soaked snows of Poland.<sup>2</sup>

### The Grand Army of 1806

The difference in the command arrangements between the French and Russian Armies operating in Poland is so striking that it demands some comment. Napoleon's Grand Army, by October of 1806, was a very experienced army. It was comprised of a larger percentage of national Frenchmen, veterans and trained troops than Napoleon would ever command again. In 1805, it was estimated that the army was comprised of twenty five percent veterans from the days of the Republic (1793-1800), twenty-five percent veterans from the days of the Consulate (1801-1804) and fifty percent veterans from the training camp at Boulogne (1803-1805).<sup>3</sup> It was at Boulogne that the Grand Army received intense training for the planned cross-channel invasion of England.

Even though a large part of the troops were veterans, they began with a month of 'refresher' training in the schools of the soldier and the company. Then came two days of battalion and three days of division drill every week; on Sunday the entire corps drilled--infantry, cavalry, and artillery together. That training well absorbed, there were large-scale maneuvers twice a month.<sup>4</sup>

By late November of 1806, fewer than ten percent of this army was made up of conscripts. By that time however, the Grand Army had an extremely high combat experience level and reputation of invincibility.

In just one year this Army surrounded and forced the surrender of most of the Austrian Army at Ulm (October 1805). It crushed the combined Austrian-Russian Armies at the battle of Austerlitz (2 December, 1805) bringing an end to the Third Coalition against France. Then, in a single day, it destroyed the Prussian Army in the twin battles of Jena-Auerstadt (14 October, 1806). All accomplished at the cost of less than 20,000 French casualties to approximately 95,000 enemy casualties and prisoners.

The Grand Army operating in Poland during the Winter Campaign was made up of six corps, a large cavalry reserve and the Imperial Guard.<sup>5</sup> The corps was the building block of the Grand Army. Commanded by a marshal or full general these French corps were permanent formations with semi-permanent commanders. Its size could vary considerably depending upon the number of infantry and cavalry divisions attached, as well as the impact of operational losses. The benefits of this system were many, each corps could march independently, thus increasing overall strategic flexibility and speed; and members of each corps could identify with their formation, raising morale in the process. These large units consisted of a mix of infantry, artillery, and cavalry, broken into smaller divisions and brigades. One or two regiments of infantry formed a brigade, and two or three brigades made up a division.<sup>6</sup> This combined arms formation allowed a much greater flexibility in combat.

The corps was also the basis of the Napoleonic system of warfare; a grand tactical system that required rapid march rates and quick consolidation of units on the field of battle. Napoleon always tried to keep his corps within one day's march of each other so that if the enemy attacked one corps, the others could quickly assemble to support it. Preferably, this concentration would not only produce overwhelming numbers but also

place at least one corps on the flank or rear of the enemy force before the battle even began. The ability of this flanking force to appear on the battlefield was essential, for it upset the enemy's balance from the very beginning by threatening his lines of communications and retreat. The large cavalry corps was also present with the main army and ready to pursue the enemy once he attempted to retreat. This pursuit would last for days and weeks if necessary, thus facilitating the complete destruction of the enemy's army.<sup>7</sup>

The key to this system was the ability of the French Army to march quickly. Napoleon expected his corps to be able to cover an average of eighteen miles a day and up to twenty-five miles a day if, as was often the case with the flanking corps, a forced march was required.<sup>8</sup> Napoleon's secret was in his logistical system. Napoleon's army, while on campaign, lived off the land. The French troops could be trusted to disperse, forage and return to their regiments. Napoleon assigned each corps an independent line of advance, thus ensuring that only a single formation would have to live off the countryside in any given area. He reduced supply trains to a minimum, having them controlled by the corps instead of the regiments. This allowed Napoleon to always move faster than his enemies did.

The French military leadership in the 1806-1807 Campaign was superb. Born out of necessity in post-revolutionary France, which nearly depleted the army's officer corps, this new breed of officers was one that earned their positions through merit, not purchased by name, title, or wealth. This period saw the meteoric rise of successful officers and the quick dismissal of failures. Officers were now the bravest and most astute – both tactically and strategically. They actually earned, rather than bought, their

ranks. Additionally, officers were pulled from the rank-and-file through demonstrated leadership. The best that France had to offer were not only talented but also relatively young. Most of the marshals and general officers in 1806 were under forty. Napoleon was only thirty-seven.

#### The Russian and the Prussian Armies of 1806

By contrast to the French system, the enemies of France possessed large professional armies based upon the Prussian system of linear warfare. The Russian Imperial Army consisted of fourteen large divisions. These divisions were considerably larger than their French counterparts. Typically, the division held eighteen to twenty-one battalions of infantry, thirty to thirty-five squadrons of cavalry and five to six batteries of artillery. In late 1806, five Russian divisions had been moved to fight the Turks (who had been incited by the French into declaring war), one each was held in St. Petersburg and Finland, while the remaining eight were on the frontier.<sup>9</sup> Four divisions under Count Buxhowden remained on the frontier following the disastrous campaign of 1805, while four relatively fresh divisions under General Bennigsen crossed over the frontier into Prussia on 29 October 1806.<sup>10</sup>

The basic unit of organization in the Russian Army was the regiment, made up of three battalions and typically commanded by a colonel. The regiment was solely responsible for its own line of advance, meaning supply trains and logistical support. All support to the regiment on a campaign was from its supply wagons to the large and slow moving supply column of the Army. Their supply wagons, however, were excellent, a byproduct of ages of experience in harsh environments. Additionally, their care for their supply ponies was equally the result of hereditary habit. “The ubiquitous, shaggy, hardy

Russian ponies . . . proved indispensable for transport in bad weather. Many of the larger horses . . . brought from Western Europe died from the cold, but the native breed could survive in the open at almost any temperature if merely sheltered from the wind.’<sup>11</sup>

Tactically, these regiments were loosely grouped into columns or divisions for maneuver. “Below the division headquarters, there was no intervening tactical headquarters equivalent to the brigade. All cavalry and infantry regiments and each artillery battery, received instructions from the division headquarters.’<sup>12</sup> Additionally, this tactical formation for maneuver, or march formation, was further broken down on the evening of an engagement, to a combat organization. The division’s cavalry (with horse artillery), light infantry and heavy artillery would often be cut out and placed into ‘detachments’ that were given a specific mission to support the army’s plan as a whole. What was left of these divisions then would often be combined into a number of ‘ad hoc’ columns (or wings) under the command of the senior division commander present. Additionally, the assigned foot artillery batteries were dispersed at a rate of two guns per battalion completely diminishing the firepower of this artillery.

The structure’s intent was to guarantee ultimate flexibility while in the field so that depleted regiments would not necessarily go into action because their division did so. Operationally brigades could be created on the spot to execute the necessary tasks at hand. Realistically, however, this antiquated method of warfare failed to emphasize efficient battlefield coordination. The result of this command and control system was, more often than not, utter confusion and lack of tactical flexibility at any level above the regiment. Many grim events occurred when troops who were unfamiliar with each other attempted to maneuver in the presence of the enemy.

Generally speaking the Russian leadership in the 1806-1807 Campaign was mediocre. Many of the best officers were non-Russian, taking positions in the army at a time when it was considered “beneath the dignity” of educated nobility to serve. Despite all this, as in all conflicts, certain brave and intelligent individuals float to the top and some of these found themselves in Poland. While the terms general, lieutenant general, major general and brigadier general have been applied, these do not seem to have any meaning within the Russian Army where social rank and political influence were more important to attaining rank than training, experience or talent. Titles of royalty were also common among the Russian officers, with princes, dukes, etc. abounding. These titles often were superior to the military rank.

The Prussians, under Fredrick II “the Great” were probably the finest army of the eighteenth century, and it was upon its lines that all military doctrine and tactics were written. The army, led by Fredrick just fifty years earlier, helped turn the small kingdom into a world power. Although this army showed some decline in later years, Frederick's legacy and the army's reputation was so great that little was done during his successor's reigns to modernize it. The Prussian infantry and cavalry were highly disciplined and trained. They consistently fought well despite overwhelming odds. Poor military leadership at the senior levels was its worse fault. The practice of diluting hitting power by constantly deploying units piecemeal and unsupported lead to disaster against the well-organized French.

Frederick Wilhelm, through neutrality and poor diplomacy, allowed Prussia to be driven to war with little thought of the wretched state of his army. On 14 October 1806, just two weeks after their declaration of War against Napoleon, the Prussian Army was

virtually annihilated. While Napoleon crushed the large rear guard at Jena, Marshal Davout decisively defeated Fredrick Wilhelm's main army at Auerstadt. Within five weeks of the dual disasters of Jena and Auerstedt, the Prussian Army had all but ceased to exist. Remnants attempting to escape were hunted down, while one garrison and depot after another simply capitulated without firing a shot. Left to defend East Prussia and the Monarchy, which had fled to Konigsburg, was a 'Corps' of approximately 29,000 men with perhaps another 20,000 men scattered at depot units and garrisons.<sup>13</sup>

#### Political Backdrop

A week after the dual defeats of Jena and Auerstedt, the Prussian King Frederick Wilhelm was fully intent upon suing for peace. The terms were severe: cession of all Prussian territory on the left bank of the Elbe, no alliances with the other German States and a war indemnity of 100 million francs. Additionally, Prussia had to demand the immediate withdraw of all Russian forces from her territory. He was given a week to comply.<sup>14</sup> Most of the generals around the King were for accepting however, Queen Luise and a handful of ministers won out. Ultimately, the threat of severing his alliances with Tsar Alexander, and possibly marshaling Prussians in a campaign against the Russians, was too much for the King and he firmly rejected the peace offer on 22 November.<sup>15</sup>

The Tsar did not have any sympathetic feelings for the Prussians. They had not come to Austria and Russia's aid during the ill-fated 1805 campaign and they had all but asked for war with France in 1806. After Prussia's stunning defeat, Tsar Alexander feared the idea of an unchecked French Army in East Prussia. Napoleon's decisive victory over the Prussians had already begun to upset the political balance between

Russia and the Poles. Napoleon had already incited the Sultan of Turkey to declare war on Russia. Would he not do the same with Poland? With such logic pointing the way, Alexander ordered additional troops to the aid of the Prussians, with the hope of halting the French far from the Russian border.

Napoleon had hoped that the decisive defeat of the Prussians would convince the Russians not to continue the war. He also hoped that peace was close at hand. Word of the arrival of Russians in Warsaw and the firm renunciation of the armistice by Prussia quickly diminished these hopes. Napoleon turned his eyes to the slowly approaching Russian Army and ordered a concentration of force for a renewed campaign. As the Grand Army turned to face the approaching Russians in late November however, morale began to falter. "The most difficult task that can be imposed upon an army is to enter on a second campaign, against fresh enemies, immediately after one in which its moral energies have been partially consumed."<sup>16</sup>

The renewed campaign required additional troops. Troops were needed to hold Prussian territories, troops to keep an eye on the ever-revengeful Austrians, and troops to protect his lengthening lines of communications. In late November, Napoleon was forced to order the unpopular conscription of all eligible members of the class of 1807, almost a year before its time. This was the second time in two years that Napoleon had to draw upon the future account of France's population to build his Army. In 1805, Napoleon had called out the Class of 1806 a year early. The French Senate, in late November, "presented a strong and eloquent plea for general peace. Napoleon was as astounded as he was affronted. This event indicated that Napoleon's hold on the French people was beginning in certain respects to weaken and wear thin."<sup>17</sup> Napoleon, however, looked at



the slowly approaching Russians and saw an opportunity, with one more quick campaign, to break the last resistance in continental Europe before the onset of winter. The stage was set for the terrible winter campaign of 1806-1807.

### Initial Maneuvers

Napoleon advanced from Berlin in early November not knowing the exact Russian dispositions. He dispatched Marshal Murat, the Reserve Cavalry Corps commander, to determine the location and strength of the Russian Army. Murat, in Poland, found the terrain very difficult, making it nearly impossible to gather information on the enemy. "The rain fell in torrents, turning the low lying countryside into muddy swamps . . . and when cavalry columns tried to move across country they frequently had to skirt huge lakes that were not marked on any map."<sup>18</sup> Marshal Davout, commander of the III Corps, moved forward to support Murat. Davout was ordered to advance on Posen, but was to avoid any serious engagement while trying to locate the enemy until the entire army could be brought forward. After receiving initial information of no Russian troops east of the Vistula River, Napoleon ordered his entire Army to assemble at Posen and there, fight a battle with the Russians, if they were willing to advance to meet him.

General Bennigsen, commander of the Russian forces in Poland, knew however, that his force was far inferior to Napoleon's and held in the area of Warsaw with the intent of defending the Vistula River until General Buxhowden's reinforcing army of 36,000 men could arrive to support him from the north. Additionally, Bennigsen received word from Moscow that an additional 33,000 men were being moved from the Turkish frontier and should arrive in Poland by mid-January. Bennigsen's four divisions were at Plonsk (Tolstoi's 2nd Division), Pultusk (Sacken's 3rd Division), Prasnysz (Galitzen's 4th

Division), and Warsaw (Sedmoratzki's 6th Division).<sup>19</sup> Buxhowden's Army reached Bialystock by mid-November and was expected in the area around Pultusk by mid-December. The Prussian Commander, General Lestocq, who was ordered to open communications and cooperate with the Russians, moved his forces forward to Thorn on the Vistula.

On 9 November, Davout, already in Posen, saw no sign of any Russian movement. Napoleon revised his plans and ordered Davout to Warsaw. Still unsure of the Russian strength or intentions, Napoleon decided to create a second temporary reserve cavalry corps commanded by Marshal Bessieres, the Guard Cavalry Commander.<sup>20</sup> With the cavalry screens of both Murat and Bessieres, news was soon brought to Napoleon that the 'entire' Russian Army was in the vicinity of Warsaw.<sup>21</sup> Napoleon ordered the corps of Marshal Ney (VI Corps), Marshal Bernadotte (I Corps), Marshal Soult (IV Corps), and half the Reserve Cavalry under Bessieres to harass the Russian front and right flank along the Vistula River.<sup>22</sup> Napoleon himself brought up the corps of Marshal Lannes (V Corps), Marshal Augereau (VII Corps), and the Imperial Guard to support Murat's Cavalry and Davout's III Corps push on Warsaw (See Appendix C).

On 27 November, Murat had established a screen in front of Warsaw after defeating a small force of Russian cavalry. The next day, the Russian rear guard evacuated Warsaw and burnt the Warsaw-Praga Bridge over the Vistula River. By 30 November, both Murat and Davout were firmly in control of Warsaw with the remainder of the French Army fast approaching. When Napoleon learned of the complete evacuation of Warsaw by the Russians, he quickly realized that he had numerical superiority over his adversary. Wishing to seize the opportunity he pushed his troops

across the Vistula at Warsaw and ordered Marshall Davout's corps forward to establish bridgeheads across the Bug River. Napoleon, forcing his tired army across Poland, still hoped that he would be able to destroy the Russian Army before the heart of winter set in.

### Initial Troubles

In Poland, Napoleon recognized that his greatest difficulty was to be in obtaining supplies. His fast movement east had already put a major strain on his resources and the changing weather began to interfere with bringing supplies forward. Almost immediately, Napoleon's Marshals sent reports that alluded to the difficulty of campaigning in Poland so late in the season. Lanes states, "It's impossible to get one day's bread ration for an army corps here."<sup>23</sup> Augereau adds, "We are traversing a waste that yields us no supplies. The men are bivouacking in the open, and many of them have no greatcoats. The roads are appalling and the season is hard."<sup>24</sup> These hardships were only to worsen. "Napoleon was for the first time beginning to find the question of supplies difficult. It had become evident that the Emperor could not get what the soldiers urgently needed . . . nor could he hold his marshals to the task of feeding their men upon the country."<sup>25</sup>

Napoleon's grand proclamation on 2 December did little to inspire his troops to the onset of this new campaign. "Peace was what the men had expected after the sweeping victories over the Prussians; instead, they found themselves ordered into the frozen wastes of Poland. They had not been able to rest, and they had not been fully re-equipped. Napoleon's appearance still brought cries of "*Vive l'Empereur!*" but they were echoed weakly among the troops. The Grogards marched, as did the rest of the Army, but woodenly."<sup>26</sup> Both the sudden change in weather, and over one month of hard marching to come to grips with the Russians, had taken their toll on the Grand Army. The

Army had not had any rest since the previous August. The troops were looking for a long, well-deserved break and although Warsaw was not their primary choice, it was much better than the deserted, cold countryside of Poland. “The French troops,” as stated by General Rapp, an Aide de Camp to Napoleon, “manifested the greatest repugnance to crossing the Vistula.”<sup>27</sup> The campaign that followed would prove to be the death nail for the tired but yet undefeated Grand Army.

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<sup>1</sup>The Cold War and the inability of most Western historians (including myself) to read the Russian language, kept many Russian sources out of the reach of Western historians for most of the Twentieth Century. Only since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 have many additional Russian source documents become available. Thanks to the World Wide Web, many of these Russian sources are beginning to become available for translation to English.

<sup>2</sup>In March of 2000 I spent twenty days walking the ground where this campaign took place -- from Warsaw to Bagrationousk (modern Eylau). This physical terrain and weather analysis provided me an amazing amount of detail as to the conditions in which these Armies found themselves maneuvering, fighting and trying to survive.

<sup>3</sup>John R. Elting, *Swords Around a Throne. Napoleon's Grande Armee* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 60.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 534.

<sup>5</sup>Mortier's II Corps occupied the country between the mouths of the Oder and the Vistula to check any attempted invasions of the Prussian coast by Sweden, part of Russia's alliance.

<sup>6</sup>At the start of the 1806 campaign against Prussia, most of the French regiments were ordered to leave one of their battalions in France to deal with any potential British invasion from the coast. Most regiments operating in Poland during the winter campaign had two or three battalions instead of the usual three or four. Note from Frank Loraine Petre, *Napoleon's Campaign in Poland, 1806-1807* (London: J. Lane, 1907), 18.

<sup>7</sup>David G. Chandler, *Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1966), 133-191.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>9</sup>Theodore Ayrault Dodge, *Great Captains--Napoleon Vol 2* (Cambridge, Mass: The Riverside Press, 1904), 439.

<sup>10</sup>The four Russian divisions on the frontier with Buxhowden had participated in the 1805 Campaign and had not had their losses "made whole" since December 1805. A closer examination of these losses show that virtually every battalion cannon was lost at Austerlitz--even if half of these (a large assumption) were replaced Bennigsen would have had 30-40 less cannons available to the Russians for the winter campaign. Note from David G. Chandler, *Austerlitz, 1806--Battle of the Three Emperors* (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1990), 32-33.

<sup>11</sup>Dr. Allen F. Chew, *Fighting the Russians in the Winter: Three Case Studies, "Leavenworth Papers"* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1981), 35.

<sup>12</sup>Robert E. Everson, *Marshal Jean Lannes in the Battles of Saalfeld, Pultusk, and Friedland, 1806 to 1807: The Application of Combined Arms in the Opening Battle* (Ft. Leavenworth, KS: USA CGSC Library, 1994), 55.

<sup>13</sup>Eduard von Hopfner, *Der Krieg von 1806 und 1807* (Berlin: LTR-Verlag GmbH, 1991), 77.

<sup>14</sup>H Butterfield, *The Peace Tactics of Napoleon, 1806 – 1808* (Cambridge: University Press, 1929), 12-13.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 27-31.

<sup>16</sup>Freiherr Colmar von der Goltz, *Jena to Eylau, the Disgrace and the Redemption of the Old-Prussian Army; a Study in Military History* (New York: Demi-Solde Press, 1999), 335.

<sup>17</sup>David G. Chandler, *Jena, 1806--Napoleon Destroys Prussia* (London: Osprey Publishing Ltd., 1994), 85.

<sup>18</sup>David Johnson, *Napoleon's Cavalry and its Leaders* (Padstew, England: T.S. International Ltd., 1988), 49.

<sup>19</sup>Petre, 68.

<sup>20</sup>Johnson, 49-50.

<sup>21</sup>Henry Lachouque, *Napoleon's Battles: A History of his Campaigns* (New York: E.P. DuHon and Co. INC., 1967) 156.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>G. Lechartier, *La Manoeuvre de Pultusk* (Paris: Librairie Militaire R. Chapelot et Cie, 1911), 91.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Dodge, 442-443.

<sup>26</sup>Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory: Napoleon's Military Campaigns* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Ins., 1987), 105.

<sup>27</sup>Jean Rapp, *Memoirs of General Count Rapp, First Aide-de-Camp to Napoleon* (London: H. Colburn and Co., 1823), 119.

## CHAPTER 2

### THROUGH THE EAGLES TALONS

The first part of Napoleon's campaign in Poland is known as either the Pultusk Campaign or the Maneuver of the Narew. The campaign began on 2 December, the date Napoleon entered Warsaw, and continued until 28 December, the date Napoleon called an end to operational maneuvers against the Russians and ordered his army into winter quarters. The tired soldiers of Napoleon's Grand Army were unable to conduct the hard marching required for the planned encircling attack against the Russians. After four months of campaigning through Prussia, French commanders found themselves unable to live off the land or support themselves in the sparse, under populated winter countryside of Poland. This, mixed with the extreme weather changes of alternate frost and thaws that turned the Polish road system to nothing more than mud, prevented Napoleon's corps from being able to rapidly consolidate when the situation required it. The Russians were able to punch through the slowly approaching and widely separated French troops, causing severe casualties and the near moral collapse of the Grand Army. A study of the Pultusk campaign reveals the first failure of the Napoleonic system. This campaign

reveals for the first time that Napoleon was unable to achieve the decisive result he desired – the destruction of the Russian Army before the onset of winter.

### Crossing the Vistula River

Bennigsen noted the speed of the French concentration and, fearing his flank would be turned, withdrew from Warsaw and the Vistula to a more defensible position along the Ukra and Narew Rivers. Lestocq was ordered to withdraw to Strasburg. Within days, Murat had occupied Warsaw, Davout had entered Praga, and Ney had stormed and captured Thorn. Having second thoughts on his hasty withdrawal from a strong defensive position, Bennigsen ordered an advance hoping to catch the French straddling the Vistula and Bug Rivers.

The first real clash between French and Russians in the campaign occurred between some of the best troops of either side, those of Davout's III corps and General Osterman-Tolstoi's 2nd Division. Davout had been in the process of creating a fortified bridgehead on an island in the Bug opposite Okunin (at the juncture of the Bug and the Ukra, the island being divided by a fordable channel into two parts). Davout's position (General Faint's Second Division, III Corps) over the Bug extended to the town of Pomiechowo about 2000 yards up the Ukra River. Tolstoi, receiving Bennigsen's orders for an advance, sent a small detachment (a Russian jager and hussar regiment) across the Ukra in the early morning of 11 December. Initially successful at driving the French out of Pomiechowo, Tolstoi failed to reinforce success and took up defensive positions.<sup>1</sup> General Faint was ordered by Davout to counter-attack and successfully drove the Russians back across the Ukra by mid afternoon.<sup>2</sup> As a result of this check, Bennigsen characteristically changed his plan of operations to one of defending the line of the Ukra.

This Russian 'counter offensive' went pretty much unnoticed by the rest of the French Army who were continuing to pour over the Vistula River. By 22 December, most of the French Army had made its way across the Vistula. Ney's VI Corps and Bernadotte's I Corps crossed at Thorn, then moved towards Strasburg with Bessieres' cavalry corps preceding them. Soult's IV Corps crossed near Plock and Augereau (VII Corps), failing to bridge the Vistula, ferried his corps across at Zakroczyn.<sup>3</sup>

### Forcing the Ukra River

By 22 December, Bennigsen had only his four divisions to defend the angle between the Ukra and Narew. Lestocq's Prussians were unable to link with the Russians due to Bessieres' cavalry screen near Biezun. Buxhowden, leisurely advancing west, was only at Ostrolenka. The two divisions pulled from the Turkish front under Essen I were still 116 miles away from Warsaw and were not expected to arrive in theater until early January.

Russian operations were further hampered at this time by no clear unity of command. Bennigsen and Buxhowden were independent of each other, although given vague orders to act in unison by the Tsar. Given the seeming inaction of his forces since late October, the Tsar felt compelled to 'help' the situation by appointing an overall commander for the Allied Forces, Field Marshal Count Kamenskoi.<sup>4</sup> Arriving at Pultusk on 22 December, Kamenskoi immediately noted the weak disposition of the French and ordered a push to drive the French over the Vistula.<sup>5</sup> Before Kamenskoi's offensive could get underway, Napoleon, realizing the tenuous hold of Davout over the Narew, launched a brilliant night attack. The first French attempt to crack the Ukra line, and the first real



battle of the campaign, occurred once again between Davout's and Tolstoi's crack troops near the same town of Pomiechowo, this time covering the area over the Ukra between this town and the Bug River. (See Appendix D).

Tolstoi had under his command in the area most of his 2nd Division (three regiments of infantry, two cavalry squadrons, a regiment of Cossacks, twelve heavy guns, and half of a horse battery).<sup>6</sup> The bulk of these troops were strung in redoubts along a ridge running roughly from the Ukra River opposite Pomiechowo through a pinewood to a ravine flanking the town of Czarnowo. Below this ridge the land, like that on the island, was a flat, marshy and partially wooded floodplain. Davout's corps was still occupying its position opposite Pomiechowo with Faint's division. General Morand's First Division had occupied the island mentioned above and was waiting for Faint to complete his fortifications and place his cannon to best support his division's assault across the far side of the Bug. General Gudin's Third Division was at Okunin waiting to cross behind Morand. On the morning of the 23 December, Napoleon climbed a roof of a small house to examine the enemy position and make plans for a crossing.<sup>7</sup>

The night of 23 December, three battalions of Morand's troops formed into columns and detached *voltigeurs* to cover the emplacement of Morand's artillery at the riverbank. These *voltigeurs* then proceeded to cross the remaining portion of the river in boats brought up from elsewhere on the Bug. With the *voltigeurs* across, three bridges were put into place. In the late evening hours, the 17th Regiment first, then three cavalry squadrons, and finally the remainder of Morand's division crossed the Ukra River undetected. Following Morand, a detachment under the command of Brigadier General Petit, Gudin's 1st Brigade Commander, crossed at the left bridge and moved along the

Ukra towards Pomiechowo supported by Friant's guns which threatened to fire into the flank of any counter-attack against their front.<sup>8</sup>

Morand formed in echelon back from right to left, with the 17th Regiment now leading the way. In this manner, the low ground was rapidly cleared of Russians and Morand advanced to the assault on Czarnowo. The 17th Regiment hurried well forward of the remaining French and burst, almost by surprise, into the batteries in front of this town. Due to lack of support the 17th Regiment were driven away by a determined Russian bayonet attack.<sup>9</sup> As Morand's main body came up, he organized a more thorough attack. One regiment turned the left of the Russian line at Czarnowo through the ravine along the Bug, a second regiment turned the Russian right near the town through the pinewood, and the third regiment advanced on the front of the position.<sup>10</sup> The remainder of the division followed in support. Tolstoi's 2nd Division initially turned the attack back, but it was apparent that to him that he could not hold the position for long against overwhelming numbers. Tolstoi dispatched his heavy guns towards Nasielsk to prevent their capture and prepared for a fighting withdraw.<sup>11</sup>

The French, advancing on the left under and supported by the fire from Friant's guns, were able to capture the line of redoubts on their front. Tolstoi had ordered their withdraw just in time to avoid capture. Then, before dawn, Czarnowo finally succumbed to French numbers. Tolstoi's detached troops (a regiment of infantry and some cavalry squadrons) arrived allowing him to fall back towards Nasielsk following the route taken by his heavy guns. By daybreak, Friant's Division crossed over the bridges around Okunin and started the pursuit.

In all, the action had lasted about nine cold, dark, wet and miserable hours. Tolstoi reported his losses at 500, although other sources suggest the Russian loss to be as much as 1,392 men killed and wounded.<sup>12</sup> Davout claimed the loss of 807 men although his total loss was probably higher than that of the Russians.<sup>13</sup> The results justified Napoleon's confidence in Davout's troops. His decision to make a night attack prevented losses, which would have been unavoidable in daylight hours. Both the construction of the assault bridges and the advance over the low open ground would have been conducted under direct fire of Russian artillery.

Later that same day Augereau forced his way over the Ukra past Barclay De Tolly's forces in the northeast at Sochocin and Kolozab. At the cost of 66 killed and over 500 wounded, Augereau secured the bridge at Sochocin and the main road from Plonsk to Ciechanow, thereby opening the Russian right to any flanking movement.<sup>14</sup> General Lasalle's Light Cavalry Division and General Klein's Dragoon Division, connecting Augereau and Davout's corps, crossed at Borkowo meeting little resistance against the detached troops from Tolstoi's division commanded by his aid General Dorokhov.<sup>15</sup>

As news of the engagement at Czarnowo spread and the additional crossings over the Ukra gained way, the Russian advance halted. The bridge at Sochocin was the point where Kamenskoi was going to launch his main attack over the Ukra.<sup>16</sup> With that crossing now in French hands and the additional crossings at Borkowo and Kolozab this planned assault was cancelled.<sup>17</sup> Kamenskoi began to think of nothing but saving his defeated army. Additionally, Kamenskoi received news that Ney also caught Lestocq at Soldau, defeating a large portion of his rear guard and further cutting communications between the Prussians and their Russian allies.<sup>18</sup> Count Kamenskoi became delusional;

"he rode to and fro amongst the troops making wild speeches," and ordered a general retreat back to the Russian border.<sup>19</sup> Bennigsen, although the junior of the three senior commanders, felt obliged to take command and ordered a retreat to Pultusk.<sup>20</sup> This retreat was particularly hard and his choice of Pultusk was a poor decision because it left part of his force cut off by the advancing French. In his rush fifty to sixty guns (the only significant loss of Russian Artillery during the entire Campaign) and much of the baggage train was left in the mud.

#### Movement to Contact

From the Bug River, Bennigsen had moved the bulk of his troops (the 2nd, 6th, and most of the 3rd and 4th Divisions) toward Pultusk. Prince Galitzin (with only part of his Division) cut off by the advancing French, had been forced north to Strzegocin where it had met with part of General Dokhturov's 7th Division from Buxhowden's Army. Early in the morning of 26 December, Dokhturov was ordered by Marshal Kamenskoi to halt his advance and retreat toward Markow (Kamenskoi had continued to issue orders in his lucid moments--the last being to flee to Mother Russia--where he himself went on 26 December).<sup>21</sup> Kamenskoi then continued to Markow and halted any further advance by Buxhowden's forces.

Napoleon at this time had no clear understanding of the Russian Army's intentions or locations. Following a careful review of the road systems, his cavalry reports, and judging the enemy's possible motives, Napoleon logically concluded that the Russians had retired on the Ciechanow-Golymin-Pultusk line, massing perhaps 30-40,000 troops at Ciechanow.<sup>22</sup> With this picture in his mind, Napoleon ordered the

concentration of his corps in anticipation of a decisive battle at Ciechanow. The inability of Murat to conduct proper reconnaissance of enemy forces, and the confusion in Russian command and control, kept Napoleon from closing the trap door on the fleeing Russians. Napoleon, without proper intelligence, was forced to make uninformed decisions.

When Lasalle reported an assembled body of Russian troops at the small crossroads town of Golymin, Napoleon became convinced that this was the Russian main body and directed all available corps to assemble for battle at that location. He sent Soult east with orders to cut the Russian line of retreat. Augereau was ordered to directly attack the Russian left flank while Murat and Davout attacked through Golymin to assault the Russian line from the south. Lannes was ordered to Pultusk to prevent the Russians from retreating eastward.<sup>23</sup> With any luck, Bernadotte ordered south, would strike from the north.

#### The Battle of Golymin

Prince Gallitzin arrived in Golymin at about 8:00 a.m. on 26 December, pausing there to unite with part of Saken's Division and to rest his men. Already present were the lead elements of Dochterov's 7th Division that had just received Kamenskoi's orders to retreat on Makow. Dochterov, warned by Gallitzin of the rapidly advancing French, decided to detached the Moscow Musketeer Regiment and the Moscow Dragoon Regiment and remain at Golymin to assist Gallitzin while the rest of his 7th Division retreated to Makow.<sup>24</sup> At about 9:00 a.m., the French advance guard consisting of Lasalle's light cavalry arrived.

While the Russian cuirassiers, dragoons, and horse artillery checked Lasalle's light cavalry, Augereau's column appeared near Ruskowo. Gallitzin resolved to defend

the crossroads, placing the Tauride Grenadier Regiment and Dneiper Musketeer Regiment flanked by two squadrons of the Order of St George Cuirassier Regiment and two squadrons of the Pskov Dragoon Regiment near the town of Kaleczyn (which sits about 400-500 paces to the west of Golymin). One horse artillery battery supported these regiments. Behind Kaleczin in the woods stood the Malorussia (Little Russian) and two squadrons of the Soum Hussar Regiment. In the woods to the left and south of the main position was the Kostroma Musketeer Regiment. Behind these were the remaining squadrons of the cavalry regiments. The two regiments of the 7th Division remained in reserve at Golymin.<sup>25</sup>

Due to the horrible road conditions, Augereau Corps did not begin arriving at Golymin until late afternoon, around 2:30 p.m. Augereau directed General Heudelet's Second Division to the left to attack towards Wadkowo, while General Desjardins' First Division moved directly on Golymin. About the same time Murat arrived with Generals Milhaud and Klein's dragoon divisions and Davout's light cavalry division under General Marulaz. Murat's cavalry drove the Russian cavalry screen into the woods, clearing the way for the infantry assault. With stiff Russian resistance and without artillery support the assault did not go well.

Desjardins, moving on the town of Ruskowo, found a large number of Russians to his left and was obliged to leave one of his brigades in Ruskowo to protect his rear until Heudelet moved forward. Heudelet, advancing between Wadkowo and Golymin, was attacked on the flank by the Russian cavalry but formed square in time to repulse the assault. The Russian cavalry repeatedly assaulted the French, forcing them to remain in squares. Meanwhile Desjardins' second brigade advanced and at first pushed back

Tcherbatow's detachment, but the Russians held firm, and eventually overwhelmed the French, forcing them to retire. Augereau's assault then degenerated into a battle of skirmishers, although Heudelet was able to slowly envelope the Russian right flank.<sup>26</sup>

To the south another separate action was taking place. Davout's first two divisions (Morand and Friant) had marched north from Strezgoczin at daybreak. Warned by Cossacks of Morand's advance, Galitzin moved his reserve to support Scherbatow's regiment. About 3:00 pm Pahlen arrived with additional Russian cavalry and the 21<sup>st</sup> Jager Regiment.<sup>27</sup> Morand formed his 1st brigade in battalion columns to assault the woods, with the brigade of d'Honnieres behind. It was after 3:30 p.m. when the attack commenced, less than an hour of daylight remained. The burning village of Garnowo helped to illuminate the scene, having been set afire by retreating Cossacks.<sup>28</sup> Morand was able to push the Russians out of the woods but suffered heavy casualties. As in Augereau's case, Davout's artillery support was far behind and the assault was carried out entirely with infantry.

Seeing the Russians retreating towards the Makow road, General Rapp (Aide de Camp to Napoleon), leading a large body of cavalry, assaulted the Russian cavalry to his front. After initial success, Rapp blundered into a Russian 'trap.' The Russian infantry were standing in the bogs up to their waist on either side of the road, and poured a heavy fire into the French. The general himself was wounded and his dragoons were forced to withdraw.<sup>29</sup> Given the darkness and the uncertain ground before him, Morand halted at the edge of the woods.<sup>30</sup> Friant, due to the swampy conditions of the ground, was unable to maneuver quickly enough to engage the retreating Russians. Under the cover of darkness, first Dochterov, then Gallitzin withdrew along the Makow road.

The Battle of Golymin was a well-fought engagement. By excellent use of interior lines and careful timing in deployment of his reserves, Gallitzin deserves great credit. His forces probably did not exceed 18,000 men, while Augereau, Davout, and Murat had closer to 35,000, although without artillery support. Given the intensity of the action, there were relatively few casualties, perhaps 800 on each side.<sup>31</sup> Napoleon thought that he had just narrowly missed the decisive battle he desired at Golymin; little did he know that it was at Pultusk (less than ten miles away) that Lannes alone faced the main concentration of Russian forces.

#### The Battle of Pultusk

Bennigsen's retreat to Pultusk carried with it substantial consequences. The fast advancing French troops had separated parts of both Sacken's and Gallitzin's Divisions from Bennigsen. As previously mentioned, the march through saturated woods and mud caused the abandonment of at least fifty guns and a great deal of baggage. Bennigsen's back was towards the wide Narew River with only one major crossing in Pultusk itself. Nevertheless, on 26 December, Bennigsen organized his forces and decided to stand fast against Kamenskoi's explicit orders to retire on Russia.

The Russians were deployed to the west and south of Pultusk, generally following the Golymin road that runs along the slightly elevated ridge through the town of Mosin to Pultusk. Three lines of infantry consisting of thirty-eight battalions of the 2nd and 6th Divisions and parts of the 3rd and 4th Divisions formed the main body. The heavy artillery was deployed before the first line. A detachment under General Barclay de Tolly was slightly forward and to the right of the main line with three jager regiments, a musketeer regiment, and the Polish Lancer Cavalry Regiment. On the left, General



Baggavout held a similar advanced position designed to cover the Narew Bridge with ten battalions of infantry, five squadrons of Tarter Lancers and one heavy battery. On the leading edge of the ridge, between the two advanced detachments, were placed twenty-eight squadrons of regular cavalry. In front of all were up to four regiments (twenty squadrons) of Cossacks screening the main force.<sup>32</sup>

On 25 December, Lannes moved forward his corps, with artillery, from Czarnowo to Zbroski traveling some fifteen miles in the muddy roads.<sup>33</sup> The next day, Lannes departed Zbroski at 7:00 a.m. and came out of the woods before Pultusk some time before 10:00 a.m. having only covered a distance of five miles. Having reconnoitered earlier with the light cavalry Lannes saw only Cossacks before him. About 10:00 a.m., Lannes received Napoleon orders that instructed him to advance to Pultusk, pass the Narew, and at once construct a bridgehead.<sup>34</sup> Despite obvious signs that Napoleon had misjudged the forces before him, Lannes formed his corps for an attack. He placed in line from left to right, the 34th Line, 88th Line, 64th Line, and the 17th Light Regiments, with General Becker's Dragoon Division and General Treihard's Light Cavalry Division supporting the left and right flanks respectively. The whole formation was under the command of General Suchet, Lannes' First Division commander. Three hundred paces behind Suchet, General Gazan's Second Division formed a second line with the 100th and 103rd Line, and the 40th Light Regiment. In reserve was the 21st Light Regiment. All artillery that was able to make it forward was positioned to support the first line. As usual, the French lines were preceded by a swarm of skirmishers.<sup>35</sup>

The attack began on the right, at 11:00 a.m., with General Claparede's 17th Light Regiment pushing towards Baggavout's forward position. Sweeping the cavalry and

Cossacks aside, Claparede pushed backward the Russian jagers onto the Russian cavalry line. The French center, under the command of Brigadier-General Wedell, moved forward and fell upon the retreating Russians. As the French center swung to its right, it exposed itself to attack in turn by General Koshin who rushed forward with two Russian cavalry regiments under cover of a snow squall. The Russian cavalry was quickly in the midst of Wedell's leading battalions, causing great damage. However, the same snow squall that hid the cavalry advance hid the advance of a battalion from the 88th Line, which saved the center from destruction. A confused melee ensued leading to the Russian cavalry retiring behind the main lines and Baggavout returning approximately to his starting point.<sup>36</sup>

On the left, Lannes and Suchet personally led the French attack on the Mosin Heights.<sup>37</sup> The 34th Line, with skirmishers in front, burst into the woods pushing De Tolly back to his reserves standing on the Golymin Road. A Russian heavy battery in the woods was momentarily captured, but De Tolly's reserves pushed forward and recaptured it. The 34th Line fell back into the woods and was united with the other half of the 88th Line. A severe firefight then developed between the French and Russians over the Golymin Road.

As the French first line engaged De Tolly and Baggavout, the second line moved forward to the ridge, and with the help of Treilhard and Becker's cavalry, pushed aside the Russian cavalry. In doing so, Gazan's troops exposed themselves to a deadly fire from the heavy batteries that were posted in front of the Russian first line. Gazan's attack was stalled. The battle had raged now for several hours and the French had made little progress. A bold counter stroke by Bennigsen would surely bring disaster upon the

French however, about 2:00 p.m., Bennigsen was distracted from this plan by news of a strong hostile column advancing on the Russian right.

Davout's third division, commanded by the III Corps chief of staff d'Aultanne, had left at 6:00 a.m. to move against a retreating Russian column and protect Lannes' left flank. Without engaging the large Russian body of horse and baggage, the French succeeded in capturing fourteen guns and a large number of wagons and were preparing to bivouac when heavy cannon fire was heard off to their right. D'Aultanne deduced that Lannes was heavily engaged and knowing his own difficulty in bringing up artillery assumed that the V Corps must be out-gunned. He immediately gave orders to march to the sound of the guns. With no time to coordinate with Lannes, D'Aultanne deployed his nine battalions for an immediate attack. His right echelon skirted the woods opposite Barclay's right and the left echelon rested on the little brook running past Mosin to the Narew.<sup>38</sup>

Bennigsen, seeing this new threat, wheeled the entire right of his main line so as to face Mosin. In doing so, much of the artillery was shifted greatly lessening the bombardment on Lannes' center. Linking with Lannes' extreme left, D'Aultanne drove De Tolly back upon the reforming Russian line. To counter this threat Bennigsen directed strong artillery fire along the opening of the Golymin Road and rushed forward two infantry regiments and twenty squadrons. These new Russian troops forced the now exhausted 34th Line from the woods. The resulting withdrawal created a gap between Lannes and D'Aultanne into which rushed the Russian cavalry. Lannes, against a seemingly inexhaustible source of fresh Russians opponents, was in imminent danger of being decisively defeated. Riding to the head of the 85th Line (the only uncommitted

force to plug the gap in the French line) he quickly formed them into squares and helped fight back repeated assaults by the Russian cavalry.<sup>39</sup> This continued through until 8:00 p.m. when darkness forced an end to the action.

Meanwhile, the shifting of Russian line allowed Gazan (in the center) to shift his artillery onto Baggavout's exposed right flank. This allowed for yet another assault by Wedell and Claparede's brigades that overwhelmed the Russians, forced them to abandon a battery of heavy artillery, and drove them back onto Tolstoi's main line. Tolstoi counter attacked with five fresh battalions and a heavy battery that, in turn, forced the French back. Exhausted by many hours of fighting, following a severe march Lannes' Corps was not fit to continue the battle. Lannes withdrew his Corps to the positions he had occupied that morning.

Although claiming a victory and boasting that no trace of the French could be found within eight miles of Pultusk, Bennigsen retreated from the battlefield in the early morning hours of 27 December.<sup>40</sup> "He . . . thought it more prudent to retire during the night, notwithstanding his success, as Soult was on march for Ostrolenka, and as he feared to be surrounded by the whole French army...if he remained on the position of Pultusk."<sup>41</sup> The majority of his army passed to the north, on the west bank of the Narew, to Rozan and there on to Ostrolenka. Lannes' corps was in no condition to pursue and D'Aultanne seeing the Russian retreat marched off before dawn on 27 December to rejoin his own corps at Golymin.

Losses on both sides were heavy. The French lost approximately 7,000 killed, or wounded, with the majority of these coming from the V Corps. Marshal Lannes estimated the Russian losses at 2,000 killed, 3,000 wounded and 1800 prisoners.<sup>42</sup> An eyewitness to

the battle, British Attaché Sir Robert Wilson, states the Russian losses to be only 3,000-4,000 killed and wounded.<sup>43</sup> More likely, Russian losses in this hand-to-hand struggle were closer much closer to the French, approximately 5,000.<sup>44</sup> It is clear that Napoleon did not recognize the extent of the force facing Lannes at Pultusk. He still believed that the main body of the Russian Army was assembling close to Golymin. This intelligence failure not only contributed to the high losses sustained by Lannes at Pultusk, but resulted in the main Russian Army being able to safely maneuver away from Napoleon.

### Results

The constantly changing weather and poor road conditions are often given as the reason for Napoleon's lack of success during the Pultusk Campaign. Indeed the early winter of 1806-1807 was unusual. In early December the snow and cold weather froze everything in sight. The cold weather give way to a thaw by mid-December, which turned into a complete thaw by 26 December.<sup>45</sup> The slush attained depths to be measured in feet, not in inches. "In December 1806, the infantry sank to their knees, often deeper, in the soft roads; the horses to their hocks; the guns to their axles; sometimes even guns absolutely disappeared in the clayey mire. Double and quadruple teams could not drag them along as fast as the one and a quarter miles an hour, which the infantry with almost super-human effort was able to cover."<sup>46</sup> Napoleon himself attempts to lay blame on the shortness of the days and the horrible conditions of the roads as the sole reason for failure.<sup>47</sup> The Russians however, also faced the same obstacles. The Russian rates of march (never quick) were also greatly reduced, but they were able to outmarch the French and slip away. With conditions equal for both adversaries, what else contributed to this first failure of the Napoleonic System?

In the just-concluded campaign of Jena-Auerstadt, the French had marched quickly. In the well-settled country of western Prussia, an area of four square miles could support four thousand men for two days. This meant that the troops could easily live off the land by picking up what they needed as they marched. But this new campaign led them into less fertile territory, where it took time to find enough to eat.

The countryside in Poland was extremely poor and under-populated and its sandy soil was good for only growing potatoes and making mud. “The Polish peasantry, having centuries of experience with invading armies, took refuge in the depths of their forest and swamps, with all their food and livestock.”<sup>48</sup> As Napoleon’s Army began to enter areas of Poland that the Russian Army had already drained of everything that could be considered supplies, discipline began to suffer. Straggling increased as troops fanned out over greater areas in search of food. Napoleon estimated that as much as forty percent of his men were absent from their formations on 28 December, most in search of food.<sup>49</sup> To combat this trend, greater reliance was placed upon makeshift supply columns. Unfortunately, the supply personnel were not trained or equipped to provision the army in the absence of local resources and slowly, Napoleon’s Army began to wear down and grow hungry. For the first time an adversary, the Russians, were able to outmarch the French Army.

Tactically, Napoleon characteristically failed to understand the immediate situation before him. The Russian Army was not one army but two separate bodies, controlled by three different commanders. Napoleon’s objective, the destruction of the main Russian Army, was based on the false impression that this Army was retreating on Markow. What Napoleon faced at Golymin was the retreating vanguard of Buxhowden’s Second Army, whose main body had not moved south of Markow, and cut off elements

from two of Bennigsen's divisions unable to reach Pultusk. Bennigsen, with the main Russian Army, was able to operate unhindered on his interior lines. Napoleon's frontal attacks over the Ukra did not prevent him from concentrating his forces in a strong defensive position around Pultusk supported by nearly forty heavy cannons. Lannes "was only saved from disaster, after a stubborn conflict, by Bennigsen's caution and the timely arrival of a division of Davout's Corps on his left."<sup>50</sup>

Unlike at Ulm in 1805 or Jena just two months before, Napoleon failed to keep his corps within supporting distances of each other. The weather, the distance between corps, and roads did not allow him to quickly concentrate his forces for the decisive battle that Lannes' had to fight alone at Pultusk. Napoleon instead attempted to surround the enemy before he was able to determine, with some certainty, where they were actually located or what they were doing (in all fairness to Napoleon, none of the Russian commanders knew what the Russian Army as a whole was doing either). He flung his forces in great concentric circles hoping to catch the Russians in a general retreat. "The enemy was not where he imagined him to be, one of his concentrically moving bodies struck at the air, another came up too late; and still another ran up against a superior force."<sup>51</sup> Unable to concentrate quickly, the enemy was able to punch through the widely spread grasp of Napoleon's Army and slip through the Eagle's Talons.

The Russians escaped. They had not lost a great battle, nor had they suffered significant losses, a feat not yet accomplished against Napoleon. The French Army was exhausted and in tatters. In a letter written to his brother Joseph on 28 December, Napoleon sums up the feelings of the French Army:

We are in the midst of snow and mud, lacking bread, brandy, wine, eating meat, and potatoes, making long marches and counter marches without any kind of comfort and generally fighting with the bayonet against canister: the wounded compelled to escape in sleds for fifty leagues in the open air. Having destroyed the Prussian monarchy, we are now fighting against the rest of Prussia, against the Russians, the Kalmuks, the Cossacks and the tribes of the north, which have invaded since the days of the Romans. We are making war in all its power and its horror.<sup>52</sup>

Napoleon had no choice but to admit failure, cease offensive operations, and order his Army into winter quarters. The conditions of the roads, the lateness of the season, the stubbornness of the Russian soldier, and the exhausted state of the army were factors that even Napoleon and his grand proclamations could not overcome. He would rest and rebuild his Army and deal with the Russians in the spring.

The Russians, however, had other plans. The results of Pultusk awakened great enthusiasm among Bennigsen's hungry soldiers, who were now clamorous for a decisive battle. Bennigsen hoping to secure the overall command of the entire Russian Army, sent word of his victory at Pultusk to the Tsar. He had 90,000 men, at least on paper, and was not going to leave the French in peace to recruit their numbers and physical strength in comfortable winter quarters. "The Russian Generals resumed confidence. The stain of Austerlitz was effaced from their (conscience), and the soldiers recognized themselves as not unworthy of the companions of Suvarrov."<sup>53</sup> The Russian Army was ready to steal the initiative from Napoleon.

The Pultusk Campaign identifies many of the difficulties Napoleon would continue to face in the coming campaign. More importantly however, it is the first example of the Napoleonic System failing to achieve the results it was designed to achieve--that of engaging the enemy army in a decisive battle and destroying it. Napoleon



was unable to concentrate his forces on the field of battle. The poor reconnaissance and failure of his troops to maneuver quickly can be attributed to the harsh winter environment in Poland. With his exhausted troops unable to find any sustenance, morale and discipline suffered. The Pultusk campaign was the first failure of the Napoleonic system of warfare.

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<sup>1</sup>Petre, 72.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 73.

<sup>4</sup>Marshal Kamenskoi was the first "joint" commander of the two separate Russian Armies. He evidently suffered from some sort of nervous breakdown before the battle of Pultusk, leading to his early removal from the theater.

<sup>5</sup>Petre, 77.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>7</sup>Count Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General* (London: Maximilian Graf, K. Paul, Trench, Tubner and Co., 1902) 320.

<sup>8</sup>Petre, 80.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 82.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Goetz, (December 2002) Action at Sochocin, 24 December 1806. Napoleon-Series.org. (On-line), [www.napoleon-series.org/military/battles/c\\_sochocin.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/battles/c_sochocin.html)

<sup>15</sup>Robert Goetz, (December 2002) Action at Borkowo, 24 December 1806.  
Napoleon-Series.org. (On-line), [www.napoleon-series.org/military/battles/c\\_borkowo.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/battles/c_borkowo.html)

<sup>16</sup>Goetz, Action at Sochocin, 24 December 1806, (On-line).

<sup>17</sup>Wartenburg, 320.

<sup>18</sup>Sir Robert Wilson, *Brief remarks on the Character and Composition of the Russian Army, and a Sketch of the Campaigns in Poland in the Years 1806 and 1807* (London: Printed by C. Roworth, and sold by T. Egerton, 1810), 253.

<sup>19</sup>Dodge, 446.

<sup>20</sup>Wilson, 80.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>22</sup>Dodge, 446.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Hoepfner, 123.

<sup>25</sup>Petre, 107 – 109.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>27</sup>Wilson, 82.

<sup>28</sup>Rapp, 129.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 128 –129.

<sup>30</sup>Petre, 114.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Wilson, 235-236.

<sup>33</sup>Petre, 94-95.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 95.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 95-96

<sup>36</sup>Wilson, 272-273.

<sup>37</sup>Petre, 98.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 99-100.

<sup>39</sup>Lannes was slightly wounded in the arm by a musket ball during this action.  
Note from Wilson, page 187.

<sup>40</sup>Wilson, 80-81.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 80.

<sup>42</sup>Hopfner, 118.

<sup>43</sup>Wilson, 81.

<sup>44</sup>Petre, 103.

<sup>45</sup>George Blond, *La Grande Armee* (London: Armes and Armour Press, 1979),  
111 - 118.

<sup>46</sup>Petre, 52.

<sup>47</sup>Dodge, 456.

<sup>48</sup>Etling, 564.

<sup>49</sup>Chandler, *Campaigns of Napoleon*, 525.

<sup>50</sup>Frederick W. O. Maycock, *Napoleon's European Campaigns* (London: Gale  
and Polden, 1910), 58.

<sup>51</sup>Dodge, 457.

<sup>52</sup>Blond, 115.

<sup>53</sup>Wilson, 81.

## CHAPTER 3

### CHASING THE BEAR

As 1807 began Napoleon's Army was in winter quarters. Bernadotte's I Corps was the furthest north covering the sieges of Danzig, Gdanz and Kolberg. Ney's VI Corps was concentrated near Niedenburg, Soult's IV Corps to his southeast, centered on Przasnysz, and Davout's III Corps to his southeast, extended over the Narew up to Ostrolenka. Augereau's VII Corps and Lannes' V Corps were to the southwest of the IV and III Corps and centered on Plonsk and Praga respectively. The Guard wintered below Warsaw while much of the cavalry wintered near Thorn.<sup>1</sup> These positions remained relatively stable for the next three weeks with little fighting.

The Russians, though claiming a great victory at Pultusk, continued to retreat toward Ostrolenka. In his letter to the Tsar, Bennigsen blamed the failure of the recent campaign on Buxhowden. Buxhowden was less than 10 miles from Pultusk but failed to support Bennigsen in what he felt, or reported at least, would have been a decisive battle.<sup>2</sup> In Buxhowden's defense, he had received explicit orders from Marshal Kamenskoi to halt his forward advance and begin a retreat to the Russian border. Buxhowden assumed that Kamenskoi had left him in charge of the Army and being superior in both rank and heraldry to Bennigsen, ordered a concentration of forces to discuss future operations.<sup>3</sup> Bennigsen however, continued his retreat destroying the bridges at Ostrolenka to prevent linking up with Buxhowden (and thereby making himself subordinate to the latter).

Tolstoy's great novel, War and Peace accurately describes the tension between these two commanders after the battles of Pultusk and Golymin.

In short, we retreat after the battle but send a courier to Petersburg with news of a victory, and General Bennigsen, hoping to receive from Petersburg the post of commander in chief as a reward for his victory, does not give up the command of the army to General Buxhowden. During this interregnum we begin a very original and interesting series of maneuvers. Our aim is no longer, as it should be, to avoid or attack the enemy, but solely to avoid General Buxhowden who by right of seniority should be our chief. So energetically do we pursue this aim that after crossing an unfordable river we burn the bridges to separate ourselves from our enemy, who at the moment is not Bonaparte but Buxhowden. General Buxhowden was all but attacked and captured by a superior enemy force as a result of one of these maneuvers that enabled us to escape him. Buxhowden pursues us- we scuttle. He hardly crosses the river to our side before we recross to the other.<sup>4</sup>

The Tsar was forced to send Prussian General von Knorring, from Konigsburg, to 'negotiate' a peace between the Russian leaders and arranged for a joining of the forces at Johannesburg. Here Bennigsen was made Commander in Chief of all forces (including the Prussians) as reward for his victory over the French. Buxhowden returned to Russia furious, and quit the army.<sup>5</sup>

#### Bennigsen's Plan

During the council of war at Nowogrod a plan for future operations against Napoleon was decided upon. The 6th Division and the two divisions under General Essen, now arriving from the Turkish frontier, were to be left between the Bug and the Narew rivers to watch and occupy the French right wing and protect the Russian border. The remaining divisions would assemble by the beginning of January, between Biala and the right bank of the Narew, for an advance behind the Johannesburg forest into East Prussia against the French left wing.<sup>6</sup>

Bennigsen moved on 6 January up the left bank of the Narew to Tykoczin, with the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, and 14th divisions, arriving there on 8 January.<sup>7</sup> On 12 January, some 75,000 Russian troops began their movement west, using the vast expanse

of the Johannesburg Forests to conceal their march from the Murat's cavalry screen.<sup>8</sup> This unexpected winter offensive against Napoleon's flank Bennigsen hoped would surprise the extended French left wing, allowing him to press forward and force the Vistula line, thus placing his army in a good position for the spring campaign.<sup>9</sup> This maneuver would also allow him to protect both Königsberg, the new seat of Power for the Prussian Government, and Danzig, an important port city at the mouth of the Vistula.

During this time Napoleon prohibited any offensive actions. Napoleon desired to use this period to rest his tired Army and prepare for the spring campaign. Nevertheless, early in January, Ney began to move towards Königsberg. Ney had heard rumors of Königsberg being weakly garrisoned and hoped to capture it in a quick attack and thus, gain special distinction.<sup>10</sup> The Prussians, however, perceived this threat early and allowed Ney to advance. As Ney moved forward, his corps stretched over an area fifty miles wide and fifty miles deep. Ney's light cavalry marched on Guttstadt by Passenheim and Oertelsburg and, in the following days, his headquarters were first at Wartenburg, then at Allenstein, with his troops dispersed all over the neighboring countryside.<sup>11</sup> After some initial skirmishing with the Prussians, Ney became convinced that the forces in the area were too strong for him to capture Königsberg and decided to stop his advance.<sup>12</sup> Since his troops were occupying a well-supplied countryside, Ney decided to bivouac there.

Ney, reporting to Napoleon on his recent actions, blamed his forward movement, despite explicit orders to the contrary, on a lack of supplies.<sup>13</sup> This was a reasonable excuse because the entire army was suffering due to a lack of supplies. "During December and early January there was a period of real famine, long remembered in the Grand Army. Hunger, wet, cold, and hard marching brought on disease; morale dropped

to noisy resentment.”<sup>14</sup> There were few supplies in the poor territory Ney’s troops were assigned and he felt the need to move his corps into the slightly more populated area of East Prussia. Although there were plenty of supplies available in the depot in Warsaw, extremely cold weather, bad roads and lack of wagons significantly delayed their availability and arrival. The exhausted state of the army and the logistical problems encountered in Poland were the exact reasons Napoleon desired this period of rest for his Army.

On 16 January, Napoleon received Ney's dispatch on his unauthorized advance.<sup>15</sup> Furious that his orders had been disobeyed, Napoleon blamed Ney for stirring up the Russians. Napoleon had no information on the movement of the Russian forces since their retreat from Ostrolinka in late December. His troops operating in an almost unknown territory made it difficult to get dispatches and reports in time. Nevertheless, hearing about Ney's advance to the north, Napoleon became suspicious and anticipated the approaching Russian counter-strike. Napoleon sent a series of orders intending to meet any eventualities on the left flank. Marshal Lefebvre, who had been ordered to proceed with the newly formed X Corps towards Danzig, was now redirected to Thorn with instructions to hold it at any cost. Marshal Bernadotte was ordered to support Lefebvre.<sup>16</sup>

#### Bennigsen’s Attack

With no orders from Imperial Headquarters and unaware of the Russian approach, Ney continued to hold his corps in the area around Allenstein. On 21 January, his corps cavalry brigade encountered the Russian advance guard, commanded by General Bagration, and was driven back from Schippenbeil.<sup>17</sup> Bagration sent detachments to

penetrate as far as Heilsberg and then, to move on towards the river Passarge. On the same day, General Lestocq managed to unite with the Russian right flank.<sup>18</sup> Ney fell back in an attempt to escape this unexpected Russian onslaught. By 22 January, Ney succeeded in retreating to Neidenburg, where he extended his corps towards Soult on his right and Bernadotte on his left.<sup>19</sup>

Napoleon, receiving this intelligence of the movement of the Russian army toward Schippenbeil, prepared to make his blow a crushing one. He anticipated that by proceeding further to the west, Bennigsen would inevitably expose his left flank and rear to an attack of the French main forces. Napoleon's plan was to anchor his left flank at Thorn, while rest of troops wheeled from Thorn to his right and center, driving Bennigsen into the angle between the Lower Vistula and the Gulf of Danzig.<sup>20</sup> To this end, Napoleon ordered a general advance to Allenstein.

Ignorant of French plans, the Russian and Prussian forces continued their advance. On 22 January, Prussian troops marched from Schippenbeil towards Bartenstein and pushed outposts towards Landsberg. On 24 January, the Russian headquarters was already at Heilsberg, with the advance guard approaching Liebstadt.<sup>21</sup> On the 25th, Bennigsen's headquarters reached Arensdorf, his left column, passing the Alle at Guttstadt, reached the Passarge at Deppen, while Bagration directed the advance guard forward on the road to Mohrunen.<sup>22</sup>

Upon receiving news of the Russian's advance from Marshal Ney, Bernadotte immediately ordered his corps to assemble at Preussisch Holland. Pursuing the retreating forces of Bernadotte, General Markov's detachment, the lead element of Bagration's advance guard, encountered Bernadotte's I Corps on 25 January at Mohrunen.<sup>23</sup>



Bernadotte, understanding Napoleon's intent and knowing he was outnumbered, did not want to become decisively engaged. He conducted a series of delaying actions throughout the day, slowly falling back toward Liebenau. The fight continued all day with considerable losses on both sides. The results of the engagement were that Bernadotte was able to consolidate his entire corps, and the Russians continued to advance further into Napoleon's trap.<sup>24</sup>

Bennigsen, under the false impression that by driving back Bernadotte and Ney's corps he had succeeded in his advance and Napoleon was about to retire back across the Vistula.<sup>25</sup> On 28 January, Bennigsen, seeing the exhausted state of his soldiers from continual marching, decided to rest and replenish his supplies. Bennigsen was fortunate in halting his fatigued troops since it was too late to cut off Ney or Bernadotte, and any further advance would have plunged him more deeply into the Napoleon's developing trap.<sup>26</sup> However, to pursue the retreating French troops, Bennigsen ordered the Prussians under Lestocq farther to the right, to Rosenberg and as far west as Deutsch Eylau.<sup>27</sup> The results of this move would have significant results for the remainder of the winter campaign.

#### Napoleon's Counter Offensive

It was at this moment that astonishing news arrived at the Russian headquarters. On 31 January, one of Bagration's out-posts captured a French courier and with him, Napoleon's whole plan of the campaign.<sup>28</sup> Having read the captured documents on 1 February, Bagration immediately realized the danger, for the whole Russian command, of staying in his current positions. The captured dispatches gave details of the positions of the whole French army. Bennigsen was stunned and ordered a general concentration at

Ionkovo to the North. Bagration was designated as the rear guard commander. To conceal his withdrawal, and retreat of the main Army, Bagration ordered the fires at bivouacs to be doubled and instructed one detachment of his troops to move constantly between them in order to persuade the French of the arrival of reinforcements.<sup>29</sup> These actions, Bagration believed, would cause Bernadotte to expect a Russian attack and to halt any of his own offensive action.

Seeing the apparent activity around the Russians campfires, Bernadotte was indeed convinced that the enemy intended to make an assault and therefore, ordered the retreat to Thorn, in accordance with Napoleon's last order. Bernadotte who had received no further orders from Army Headquarters (both of the captured dispatches were intended for Bernadotte), was unaware of the Emperor's intentions.<sup>30</sup> On 1 February, Bagration and Bernadotte began moving in opposite directions: Bagration moving to rejoin the main Russian forces and thus reinforcing them, and Bernadotte pushing back to Thorn.

On 1 February, unaware that the Russian's knew his intentions, Napoleon commenced the advance of the French right wing, Murat and Soult moved on Passenheim, Ney toward Hohenstein, and Davout, moved north from Myszienec.<sup>31</sup> The next day, Murat arrived at Allenstein, reporting that there were no indications of enemy presence in the vicinity in contrast to Napoleon's expectation of 15,000 Russians. The Emperor immediately changed the main direction of his attack and sent Murat and Soult to Guttstadt.

Everything leads me to think that the enemy will try to concentrate at Guttstadt. There is no conceivable chance that he will allow his left flank to be turned. However if Ney is not at Hohenstein, you must advance with great prudence, for should the foe make for Mohrungen, Liebstadt or from Osterode

toward Allenstein, instead of retreating on Guttstadt--then your situation could be very alarming.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, Bennigsen realizing the danger, prepared his army for battle at Iankowo.

Here he assembled the greater part of his forces behind the heights north of the town.<sup>33</sup>

Lestocq, still separated from the Russian main body was only one or two days march away.

Early on the morning of 3 February, Murat reported to Napoleon that a large number of Russian troops, possibly 30,000, were concentrated on the Ionkowo heights.<sup>34</sup> After personally reconnoitering the Russian position, Napoleon ordered Murat to advance on it, with General St Hilaire's First Division (IV Corps), Lasalle and Milhaud's divisions. Ney would continue as ordered; Augereau and the Guard would support them. Soult, with his two remaining divisions and Grouchy's dragoons, would turn the Russian left flank. The main attack was scheduled to coincide with Augereau's expected arrival, at about 1:00 p.m.<sup>35</sup>

Soult's attack over the bridge at Bergfried did not begin until well after 3:00 p.m. Protecting the Russian left flank at Bergfried was Kamenskoi's 14th Division and three Prussian heavy batteries. Soult's initial assaults failed, and although able to take the town and bridge, he could not capture the heights above the town due to the Prussian batteries and their canister fire. Only towards dusk was a fourth assault by Soult's tired infantry able to dislodge the Russians troops supporting these guns. It was well after nightfall before Soult had his corps fully across the Alle River.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, Napoleon thought Bennigsen would accept battle the next day. He went about making preparations for what he expected to be the demise of the Russian Army.

Napoleon advanced on the Russians the morning of 4 February. But the Russians were no longer in place. Soult's failure to get in the foe's rear the previous day had allowed the Russians to slip away in the night. A frustrated Napoleon ordered a pursuit. The Russians however, were not beaten and conducted an orderly retreat covered by a strong rear guard. This rear guard would continuously engage the tired French army for the next four days.

#### The Bloody Road to Eylau

With Lestocq still not in contact, the French assault on Bergfriede, and French cavalry in Guttstadt, Bennigsen was worried about his line of retreat. Wishing to retreat toward Königsberg and being blocked at Guttstadt he headed towards Wolfsdorf.<sup>37</sup> (See Appendix G). This movement was very slow, so that on the 4 February, the Russian rear guard had not yet left its original position. Bagration, now commanding the rear guard, consolidated his forces from three wings to two. Barclay de Tolly commanded one section, while Bagration himself commanded Baggavout and Markov's detachments.<sup>38</sup> The rear guard's mission was to conduct delaying actions to prevent Napoleon from fully engaging the main Russian body. By constantly forcing Napoleon's advance guard to deploy for battle, but keeping his force from becoming fully engaged, Bagration retained the ability to maneuver from position to position. This tactic was highly successful in keeping direct pressure off of and away from the Russian main body, while totally frustrating Napoleon's efforts to pin down the retreating Russians.

Bagration and De Tolly's forces would leap frog from position to position daily. While one fought the other would maneuver to the next defensible position. De Tolly's forces covered the first day's retreat on the morning of 4 February. Moving north under

constant French attacks, de Tolly reached Wolfsdorf later that evening, only to find that the main body had continued its retreat further northward. Bennigsen, fearing that the French were working around his left flank through Guttstadt, was forced to continue its retreat once it reached Wolfsdorf. The main Russian Army moved toward Frayendorf during the night of 4 February.<sup>39</sup> On 5 February, the rear guard duty was taken over by Bagration.<sup>40</sup> Bagration was ordered to send a detachment to Heilsburg to protect the Russian right flank on its march to Landsburg. Bagration sent Baggavout's detachment there on the afternoon of the 5 February, and kept Markov's forces in place to fight the increasing pressure of the French pursuit.<sup>41</sup> Bennigsen also sent orders to Lestocq on the 5 February for a concentration at Eylau to fight a pitched battle.<sup>42</sup>

Bagration decided to make a stand and fight Murat's troops at Wolfsdorf to give Bennigsen more time to reorganize the army and accelerate the march. Murat rushed into Wolfsdorf believing he was pursuing fleeing Russians, but unexpectedly ran into Bagration's main body. A savage fight took place but lacking infantry support Murat had to await the arrival of Soult's infantry before being able to maneuver (to outflank the Russians on both sides). Murat sent two regiments of infantry to the right, and cavalry to the left. Bagration, leading several bayonet counter attacks, pushed the French troops back. Murat was forced to halt his assault and began an artillery bombardment to soften up the Russian positions.<sup>43</sup>

During this action Bagration learned that behind the rearguard was gathered a number of carts and transports that would delay his withdrawal. Bagration's troops asked for permission either to move them from the road or destroy them. Bagration calmly replied, "What for? We are the rearguard. We must not yield a single cart or wheel to the

French, but preserve all of them,”<sup>44</sup> Bagration held at Wolfsdorf for over three hours.

This action ensured the safe retreat of the main Russian force to Landsburg.

Lestocq's Prussian forces meanwhile were still not in contact with Bennigsen. On 3 February, Lestocq had reached Osterode, and there received orders to retire on Jonkendorf. The Prussian movement was slow and the main body only reached Morhungen, while the outpost brigades pushed east over the Passarge River at Deppen.<sup>45</sup> The Russian withdraw caused Lestocq to change his direction of retreat to the North in an attempt to link with the Russian right wing. Feeling he could not wait for the outpost brigades to catch up, Lestocq moved off on the morning of the 5 January with the main body and reserve north to Liebstadt.

Ney, who had been ordered by Napoleon to stop a reported large body of Prussians moving north from the Passarge River from joining with the Russian force was also marching on Liebstadt. The Prussian advanced guard (under General Rembow) coming by way of Berging with five and a half battalions of infantry, ten squadrons of cavalry, and a horse artillery battery, blundered into Ney's Corps. General Klein's Dragoon Division joined the attack and hounded the retreating troops, taking many prisoners including the battery. Prussian losses were heavy: 35 officers and 1,098 men were captured.<sup>46</sup>

Napoleon, realizing Bennigsen had given up his retreat towards Guttstadt, shifted his advance accordingly. With his advance guard unable to fix Bennigsen at Wolfsdorf, Napoleon attempted to cut off the Russian retreat by enveloping the Russian's left flank. Davout was ordered to turn the Russian flank at Leibstadt via Heilsburg while Soult and Murat were ordered to further pursue and tie down the exhausted Russian Army.

Napoleon followed with Augereau and the Guard. Hearing of Ney's fight at Waltersdorf, Napoleon ordered Ney to push the Prussians into Bernadotte's Corps but not to move too far away as he would be needed to support any battle with the Russian main body.

On 6 February, there were two rearguard actions. Davout, marching along the Alle River, attacked the Russians at Heilsberg and seized the bridges. The main French forces encountered stiff resistance just south of Landsberg, at Hof, where De Tolly picked up the duty of rear guard commander. De Tolly was forced to defend a small riverbank guarding a bridge, while most of the Russian Army rested in Landsburg just three miles away. This bold engagement, conducted during a heavy snowstorm, lasted until nightfall. De Tolly's mauled rear guard then slipped away in the early morning and fell in with the retreating Russians toward Eylau. Bagration again took over the Russian rear guard operations with a greatly reduced force. Russians losses at Hof amounted to 2,000 men, while French lost 2,000 to 3,000 men.<sup>47</sup>

De Tolly's stand at Hof allowed the Russian Army to rest for most the day on 6 February. When they reached Eylau on the morning of the 7 February, they were refreshed and still a march ahead of Napoleon. After the action at Hof on 6 February 1807, Napoleon was convinced that the Russians intended to fight at Landsburg the next day. Ney was to the northwest in pursuit of Lestocq when he received notice at Wormditt to march to Landsberg and join the left of the French Army. Davout was also ordered to march on Landsberg. However, after the stiff resistance at Hof, Davout was diverted to Preussich-Eylau to cut Bennigsen's line of retreat. Napoleon expected Bernadotte to be able to deal with the remains of the retreating Prussians. Bernadotte, due to his

intercepted orders, was still two days march behind schedule. This would have a major impact on the battle to come.

### Results

The unseasonable offensive by Bennigsen caused Napoleon to roust his exhausted army to counter this bold Russian move. Bennigsen's intended operations would have been successful, but the implementation of his scheme depended on the ability to strike with force and not give up the initiative. Bennigsen did neither. The movement of the Russian Army, although not discovered by the French, was too slow and indecisive. As a result, the Russians missed an opportunity to cut off Ney's corps. Bennigsen's flank march against the French left was skillful in design, but not accompanied by an equally skillful execution. It failed. His decision to attack the head of Ney's column instead of toward Ney's rear prevented him from cutting off the French Marshal. Had Bennigsen turned to the southwest, he would have certainly separated Ney from Soult and shattered the greater part of the Ney's corps. He would also have isolated Bernadotte and placed Napoleon's position on the Upper Vistula in jeopardy.

Napoleon's scheme to trap and destroy the Russian Army advancing against the corps of Marshals Ney and Bernadotte is a brilliant example of Napoleon's complete operational control and understanding of a campaign concept. The Russian capture of Napoleon's orders on the day they were to become effective, proved a deciding factor in the unsuccessful results of the winter campaign in Poland. With this intelligence in hand, Bennigsen was able to extract his army out of Napoleon's trap. The Russian rear guard commanders, Generals Bagration and Barclay de Tolly conducted a retrograde action that was flawless in execution. The resulting series of engagements taught these two officers



valuable lessons in how to fight Napoleon, lessons they would indeed use again in the future.

The Russian Rear Guard allowed Bennigsen the time needed to consolidate his forces and to turn and fight the French at a time and place of his choosing, not Napoleon's – a remarkable and unprecedented achievement for the time. They provided the Russian army enough time to affect an orderly retreat to Eylau and to prepare for battle. "Under Bagration's command the rear guard never remained long in the same place... In essence, it would keep retreating from one defensive position to another without offering total battle..."<sup>48</sup> The Russian rear guard operations forced Napoleon to constantly deploy flanking corps further and further out from the main force in an attempt to cut off the retreating Russian Army. Also, the Russian Rear Guard operations further exhausted the troops of Napoleon's Advance Guard (under Murat and Soult) by forcing them to fight a constant series of bloody engagements, slowly sapping the strength of the already exhausted Grand Army. During these two weeks of action, from 21 January to 6 February, Bagration and De Tolly demonstrated great tactical talents. Their ability in keeping the Russian Army unengaged and further exhausting the Grand Army would prove invaluable in the battle to come. They allowed Bennigsen to continue his retreat during the night of 6 February to the location he planned to fight the decisive battle, the small East Prussian town of Eylau. For the first time in the Napoleonic wars, it was Napoleon caught off balance and not his adversary.

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<sup>1</sup>Petre, 116-119.

<sup>2</sup>Wilson, 235-236.

<sup>3</sup>Petre, 117.

<sup>4</sup>Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (New York: Signet, 1980), 455.

<sup>5</sup>Petre, 129.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Wilson, 84.

<sup>9</sup>Dodge, 468.

<sup>10</sup>Wartenburg, 328.

<sup>11</sup>Petre, 131.

<sup>12</sup>Wartenburg, 328.

<sup>13</sup>Petre, 131.

<sup>14</sup>Etling, 564.

<sup>15</sup>Petre, 132.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 133.

<sup>17</sup>On 3 January, General Peter Bagration joined the army as a commander of the advance guard. Note from Alexander Mikaberidze, (November 2001) Napoleon's Polish Campaign: General Peter Bagration during January--February 1807. Napoleon-Series.org. (On-line), [www.napoleon-series.org/military/campaigns.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/military/campaigns.html)

<sup>18</sup>Mikaberidze, (On-line).

<sup>19</sup>Petre, 134.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>21</sup>Wilson, 84-85.

<sup>22</sup>Mikaberidze, {On-line}.

<sup>23</sup>Wilson, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Additionally, General Anrep, the commander of the Russian 14th Division, was killed during this engagement and replaced with General Kamenskoi. Note from Wilson, 85.

<sup>25</sup> Greg Troubetzkoy, (April 1997) Prelude to Eylau: Benningsen's Report to the Czar. The Journal of the International Napoleonic Society. (On-line) [http://www.napoleon-series.org/ins/scholarship97/c\\_report.html](http://www.napoleon-series.org/ins/scholarship97/c_report.html).

<sup>26</sup> Petre, 146.

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, 253-254.

<sup>28</sup> Berthier had given this dispatch to the first officer available, a young officer knew nothing of the country he had to cross and nothing of the enemy's positions. Note from Petre, 149.

<sup>29</sup> Mikaberidze, (On-line).

<sup>30</sup> Dodge, 469.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 470.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 470-471.

<sup>33</sup> Wilson, 89.

<sup>34</sup> Wartenburg, 332.

<sup>35</sup> Dodge, 472.

<sup>36</sup> Petre, 151-152.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson, 91-92.

<sup>38</sup> Denis Davydov, *In the Service of the Tsar against Napoleon : the Memoirs of Denis Davidov, 1806-1814*, translated and edited by Gregory Troubetzkoy. (London: Greenhill Books/Stackpole Books, 1999), 26.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, 93.

<sup>40</sup> Davydov, 26.

<sup>41</sup> Mikaberidze, (On-line).

<sup>42</sup> Wilson, 254.

<sup>43</sup>Mikaberidze, (On-line).

<sup>44</sup>Mikaberidze, (On-line).

<sup>45</sup>Dodge, 473.

<sup>46</sup>Petre, 155.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 159.

<sup>48</sup>Davidov, 28.

## CHAPTER 4

### BLOOD IN THE SNOW

The Russian rear guard, under General Bagration, kept Napoleon unsteady by covering the retreat of the main Russian Army until it reached Eylau on 7 February, the place Bennigsen intended to offer battle. Bagration's rear guard action from Landsburg to Eylau allowed Bennigsen the time required to organize his forces for the coming battle. By engaging the French far forward of the town itself, Napoleon was kept unaware of Bennigsen's intention. Expecting the Russians to again retreat the night of 7 February, Napoleon deployed both the corps of Ney and Davout far forward to cut off and destroy the Russians. On the morning of 8 February, Bennigsen stood and fought. Napoleon was unprepared for an engagement and was forced to accept battle with less sixty percent of the forces available to him the previous evening.

#### Pursuit to Eylau

In the early morning hours of 7 February, Bennigsen continued his retreat from Landsberg to Preussisch Eylau, where he intended to give Napoleon a battle. Bagration's rearguard was ordered to delay the arrival of the French at the battlefield as long as possible, so the main forces could take positions and the high ground behind Eylau and prepare for the battle.<sup>1</sup> About 9:00 a.m. on 7 February, Bagration slowly retreated toward Eylau through the woods that spread between these two villages. In order to maneuver more conveniently in the forest, Bagration detached all his cavalry, part of his artillery, and, assembled all his jager regiments in the woods to defend the road leading to Eylau.<sup>2</sup> Napoleon again ordered Murat and Soult to pursue the Russians, and countermanded his orders to Davout and Ney to join his right and left flanks at Landsberg. Around 11:00

a.m., Murat made contact with Bagration's forces and slowly pushed him back toward the heights before Eylau.

Bennigsen's main body arrived at Eylau in the morning hours of 7 February.<sup>3</sup> The main body passed through the village and deployed on the rising ground only 1000 paces to the east of the town. The main body formed a line from Serpallen (on the extreme Russian left) to Schmoditten (on the right). Bagration's Detachment, withdrawn from Heilsburg, was posted in the village of Serpallen in advance of the Russian left wing to protect Bennigsen's flank from Davout's approaching forces. To screen the arrangement of this defensive position and to allow for the arrival of his heavy artillery that had taken a circuitous route to avoid delaying the march, Bennigsen ordered Bagration to defend the west and southwest approaches to Eylau. Essen's 8th Division was also ordered forward of the town to support the hard pressed Russian Rear Guard.<sup>4</sup>

Bagration's forces fell into four bodies: Markov's Detachment, supported by part of Essen's Division, formed the forward most body on a small ridge crossing the Landsberg road stretching from Tenknitten Lake to the Woschkeiten Lake. A horse artillery battery was placed on the Landsberg road in front of Markov. Most of Essen's 8<sup>th</sup> Division was placed in the angle between the Landsberg Road and Heilsberg Road. De Tolly's weakened detachment was placed in the village of Eylau, with part of his artillery and most of his cavalry in the church and cemetery height on his left. Bagration's adjutant, Captain Davidov, secured additional cavalry from General Bennigsen to help cover the rear guard's withdraw to the town of Eylau for when that would become necessary. This force of cavalry lay south of Eylau on the Heilsberg Road between the two lakes.<sup>5</sup>

### Eylau Day One

Murat's cavalry appeared about 2 p.m. from Grunhof followed shortly by Soult's Corps. Weakened by the previous day's action at Hof and missing Picard's Dragoons and part of Lasalle's light cavalry (assigned to the VI Corps on the evening of 6 February to strengthen that flanking force), Murat awaited the arrival of Soult's infantry before he launched his attack. The 18th Line and 26th Light regiments from Soult's VI Corps, Third Division were the first to arrive. Their commander General Legrand promptly formed them for battle and launched straight at the Russian forward line.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the rest of Legrand's division moved off to the right through the woods in order to turn the Russian's left flank near the Grunberg farm. Augereau Corps approaching via Tenkitten was to turn the Russian right upon their arrival.

Without waiting for these attacks to develop the 18th Regiment, slightly ahead and to the left of the 26th, crossed over the frozen lake against heavy artillery fire, and was repelled by a Russian infantry bayonet assault. As they fell back, the St. Petersburg Dragoons swept across the Lake Tenknitten hitting the 18th before they could form squares.<sup>7</sup> The regiment was overthrown losing its Eagle. The regimental commander and at least one battalion commander were also wounded.<sup>8</sup> The 26th Regiment, nevertheless, pressed forward and resisted several Russian counter-attacks before withdrawing. Their brigade commander General Lavasseur was wounded and over 500 soldiers were killed or wounded in the attack.<sup>9</sup>

This setback forced Soult to deploy his artillery and await the envelopment of the Russian position by both Augereau's corps over Lake Tenknitten and General Leval's Second Division along both sides of Woschkeiten Lake. The combination of artillery fire,

quickly amassing French forces, and a renewed assault along the whole line, pressed Bagration's forces. "There was no way for Bagration to hold the position. As all the heavy artillery had already passed through the town, Bennigsen ordered the rearguard to withdraw through the town."<sup>10</sup> Bagration passed through De Tolly's waiting forces in Eylau as dusk began to fall over the battlefield. There are different accounts as to what happened next.

Napoleon stated that he had no intentions of further actions on evening of the 7 February.<sup>11</sup> Wilson, attached to Russian Headquarters by this time also states that Bennigsen had no intention of holding Eylau.<sup>12</sup> Intentions aside, fighting broke out in the outskirts of Eylau near dusk. As Bagration's line started falling back toward Eylau, Murat galloped to the front of the IV Corps light cavalry and hurled them forward in pursuit. The sight of the cavalry charging toward the Russians that had done them such harm was more temptation than Soult's infantry could bear. Soon his divisions were converging on Eylau. The melee that followed became impossible to break off.

The fighting was intense, involving both Legrand and Leval's Divisions against De Tolly's covering force and artillery. "As these fresh troops, supported by St. Hilaire's division, advanced to the storm of the cemetery and church, the combat in the streets became more and more embittered and sanguinary."<sup>13</sup> About 5:00 p.m., De Tolly was severely wounded and his detachment was forced out of the town due to superior French numbers.<sup>14</sup> The French had lost in the attack over 1,000 casualties from Leval's division. The 4th Regiment's Commander was killed and its Eagle captured. The 24th Light's Commander was wounded, along with two other battalion commanders.<sup>15</sup>



As De Tolly's detachment was withdrawing from the village, Bennigsen ordered forward General Somov's 4th Division from the main line to cover the retreat.<sup>16</sup> As was to happen so often at Eylau, strategy went by the wayside. Bagration dismounted, drew his sword and personally led the advance back into the town. The attack met intense infantry fire as well as grapeshot in the narrow streets. By 6:00 p.m., they had succeeded in recapturing the town.<sup>17</sup> Unbelievably, Bennigsen ordered a general withdrawal. By 7:00 p.m., "Bennigsen says the town was abandoned by his order: having captured Eylau in the afternoon, the French could have bothered Russian troops in setting upon their positions, but on the next day it'd be useful to 'invite' Napoleon closer to the most advantageous place in the center of Bennigsen's position."<sup>18</sup> To secure the Army against a possible night attack or early morning assault by the French, Bennigsen kept Samov's 4th Division between Eylau and the center of his main line where a grand battery of over seventy heavy cannon were deploying.

To secure his main lines from attack, Napoleon ordered Soult to occupy Eylau and place Legrand's Division beyond the village between the Königsberg and Friedland roads. Leval's division was deployed in the houses near the church and to the left of the village. To the south, St. Hilaire's division deployed from the church to Rothenen, while Milhaud's Third Dragoon Division formed on the extreme right flank, before the town of Rothenen. Behind Eylau, in front of Tenknitten, was Augereau's corps. The Guard remained near the ridge occupied by the Russians that afternoon. The light cavalry was flung out to the far left while the reminder of Murat's dragoons and d'Hauptol's Cuirassier Division were positioned behind St. Hilaire's division on the right.<sup>19</sup>

The Russians remained largely where they had been deployed on the afternoon of 7 February. Markov's detachment, from Bagration's Rear Guard, retired to a position on the extreme right near Schloditten. What was left of De Tolly's formation retreated and joined Bagavout in and before Serpallen. The Russian heavy artillery, which had arrived that afternoon, was massed in three large batteries: a large battery of seventy guns opposite Eylau, one of sixty guns on the right, and one of forty guns between the center battery and Klein Sausgarten on the left.<sup>20</sup>

Bennigsen, having successfully consolidated and organized his forces for a decisive battle, planned to attack Eylau first thing in the morning. He was prepared to open the engagement with a large bombardment of the town at first light. "To follow up the artillery work, he formed columns of attack from his center and reserve, and held them ready to launch forward when the French line should have been sufficiently unsettled by the guns."<sup>21</sup> For this reason, the seventy guns of the grand battery of the center were positioned within a half gunshot range of Eylau.<sup>22</sup> General Sacken was placed in command of his 3rd Division, Essen's 8th Division, and Galitzin's force of Cavalry, directly in the center of Bennigsen's line, opposite Eylau. To support Sacken's assault on Eylau, General Docturov was placed in command of the reserve Divisions, the 7th and the 4th (once it was withdrawn in the early morning hours).

With the withdraw back to the main line of Samov's division, "Murat announced the retreat of the Russians. At five in the morning Napoleon verified that the approaches to Eylau were clear."<sup>23</sup> Napoleon was convinced that Bennigsen intended to retreat from Eylau. Therefore Napoleon did not summoned Ney to the battlefield on the evening of 7 February. Just in case, Napoleon had sent orders to draw Davout into position to deliver a

fatal blow against the Russians if they decided to stand for a pitched battle. Davout was ordered to take position on the road from Bartenstein so as to have the head of his column at a distance of about three miles from Eylau. Davout had his forces on the march toward Eylau by 3:00 a.m. on the morning of 8 February.<sup>24</sup>

#### Eylau Day Two – Morning Battle

Before daylight, the first troops of Davout's Corps, Friant's Division, and Marulaz's light cavalry brigade, arrived on the battlefield. Friant encountered Cossacks in front of Serpallen, whom he drove away. He then formed the division for attack, placing Marulaz's cavalry to cover his right flank, and moved on the village, which was carried at daybreak. The resistance of the Russians was trifling, and Bagovout had soon retreated to Klein-Sausgarten."<sup>25</sup> Sunrise was about 7:20 a.m.. Shortly afterwards, the Russians opened the main action with a massive bombardment directed towards Soult's positions in Eylau.

A surprised Napoleon saw the Russians formed for battle. He immediately sent orders to Marshal Ney to advance on Eylau and attack the Russians on their flank.<sup>26</sup> Napoleon, in an attempt to hide his inferiority in numbers, moved his army into positions opposite the Russian line. Augereau was ordered to a position just short of the Bartenstein Road, behind St. Hilare's Division. The dragoons, cuirassiers and Guard cavalry were positioned behind and to the south of Augereau's Corps. All the light cavalry was posted to the extreme left and placed under the command of Marshal Soult.<sup>27</sup> Napoleon posted himself by the church and ordered artillery brought forward in response to the Russian bombardment. This exchange of fire from almost three hundred cannon

(170 Russian heavy cannon and 120 French guns), began to cover the already gloomy field in a haze of smoke.

Low, heavy clouds, swept across the grey sky by a gusty and freezing wind, from time to time discharged their snowy contents with violence in the faces of the shivering soldiers. At such times, so dark became the atmosphere that the Russians could not distinguish Eylau. The snow prevented the commanders from seeing their troops; the howling north wind rendered it impossible for the soldiers to hear the word of command. At times, it was not possible to see ten yards off. The action at such moments had the character of a night attack.<sup>28</sup>

A heavy black smoke enveloped the Russian line from the burning town of Serpallen as well.

Napoleon, seeing Davout's lead elements approaching the field, intended to attack. Davout's arriving troops would envelop the Russian left flank. Marshal Augereau and the division of St Hilaire were to act as the pinning attack for Davout's maneuver. Once Davout's attack had succeeded in enveloping the Russian flank and forced the commitment of the Russian reserves, Murat's cavalry would strike the decisive blow at the angle created by Davout's flanking attack and Augereau's pinning assault. With any luck, Marshal Ney would arrive in time to cut the Russian line of retreat. This maneuver would resemble a huge wheel conducted by the entire right wing and center. Soult's troops in Eylau would act as the pivot.<sup>29</sup>

Close to 9:00 a.m., St. Hilaire's Division and Augereau's Corps began their advance to pin the forces closest to their front in support of Davout's developing assault.

This is the simplest explanation of why the Emperor between 8 and 9 a.m. gave this much-criticized order for the advance of Augereau's corps and Saint Hilaire's division. Neither his growing impatience at Davout's absence nor the fact that he had noticed a gap in the Russian line and resolved to break through it, can be produced as a reason, for neither argument will bear examination. The battle was in the first stages and the time to be impatient was not yet. Davout's enveloping attack was just opening. But no enveloping is successful unless at the

same time the enemy is vigorously tackled to the front. This Napoleon knew better than any man before or since. If he did not do so, the Russians would be given time to strengthen their left flank from the centre, fling back Davout by superior numbers and so deprive the assailant of the promise of coming victory.<sup>30</sup>

The 58th Bulletin of the Grande Army states that Augereau's advance had been made to distract the enemy's attention and prevent him from turning his full force upon Davout.<sup>31</sup>

Two events transpired that caused Napoleon's plan to slowly fall apart. The first was as Augereau's attack began, one of the frequent snow squalls of the day enveloped the advance. Visibility dropped and consequently Desjardin's division, followed by Heudelet's, took a more northern direction and was mistakenly fired upon by the French guns in Eylau.<sup>32</sup> Quickly separating from St. Hilaire, who had successfully joined Davout's developing assault on the Russian left, Augereau's divisions found themselves almost directly in front of the Russian central grand battery. A sheet of canister, at point blank range, from over seventy guns, met Augereau's troops. Both General Deshardins and his leading brigade commander, General Binot, were killed in the initial Russian salvos.<sup>33</sup> Augereau's advance halted.

The second event that doomed Augereau's assault was that his assault was in the direct path of the planned Russian assault on Eylau. About 9:00 a.m. after an hour of bombardment, General Tuchkov (commanding the Russian left wing) began the initial attack on Soult's troops occupying the outskirts of Eylau. General Doctorov, with the Russian reserve, moved forward to support Tuchkov and met Augereau in the center of the field.<sup>34</sup> A Russian witness to this struggle writes: "There then ensued an engagement the likes of which had never been seen before. Over 20,000 men from both armies were plunging their three-faceted blades into one another. They fell in masses...I have to say

in truth that over the course of sixteen campaigns in my service record and throughout the period of all the Napoleonic campaigns, I have never seen anything to compare with it!’<sup>35</sup> As the French VII Corps recoiled, Russian Prince Galitzin hurled his cavalry brigades from the Russian center in pursuit.

In less than an hour, Augereau’s corps had ceased to exist. Nine thousand men had begun the assault. Fewer than three thousand could be accounted for after the battle. Marshal Augereau, Division General Heudelet, and three brigade commanders were wounded in the attack; Division General Deshardins and Brigade General Binot were killed.<sup>36</sup> The VII Corps, out of seven regiments, lost one regimental commander and two battalion commanders killed. One regimental and five battalion commanders were wounded. The Eagles of the 14th and 44th Regiments were also captured in the engagement.<sup>37</sup>

Doctorov’s right division, the 7th, commanded by General Zapolskoi pursued the French retreat to the very outskirts of Eylau. One of Zapolskoi’s columns (about 4,000 to 6,000 men) had wandered into the western streets of Eylau and approached close to Napoleon’s headquarters.<sup>38</sup> The Emperor calmly faced this onslaught and launched his escort squadron of about 120 guard *Chasseurs a Cheval* upon the Russians who, bewildered by this assault, halted. Bessieres called upon the 1st Regiment of the Guard Grenadiers to attack the massed column. Honor bound not to hurt the Emperor, the Guard refused to fire, fixed bayonets and charged.<sup>39</sup> Supported by the left flank cavalry, which had counter-attacked the exposed flank of this formation, the Russians were trapped and reportedly slaughtered to the man.<sup>40</sup>

From his Command Post in the cemetery of Eylau, Napoleon saw Soult's corps still holding on the left. From the right, word came that the bulk of Davout's corps were coming into action. Supported by Saint Hilaire's division, Davout's corps was facing stiff resistance as it battled its way forward. The repulse of Augereau's corps had opened Saint Hilaire's left flank to attack, which placed the envelopment of the Russian left flank in jeopardy. As the Russian's continued to press forward toward the French center, Napoleon was forced to call forward his sole reserve, the cavalry under Marshal Murat.

### The Great Cavalry Charge

Murat's cavalry moved forward to fill the line vacated by Augereau. Murat later estimated his numbers to have been 10,700 (seventy to eighty squadrons from eighteen regiments).<sup>41</sup> Although eighteen cavalry regiments participated, the force had been severely depleted through numerous previous actions and winter campaigning. Given the weather and condition of the field (frozen and by this time icy compacted snow) it is hard to imagine a grand charge in the classical sense, more realistically this attack was conducted at a mere trot or feeble gallop. Never the less the sight of close to 10,000 horsemen advancing in close formation must have been awe-inspiring.

Murat ordered Klein's dragoons to charge and disperse the Russian horsemen harassing the remnants of Augereau's Corps. Milhaud's dragoons were ordered to clear the way for Saint Hilaire's division and support Davout's assault. Murat led Grouchy's dragoons to attack the advancing Russian line. The advancing troops of General Doctorov's divisions, already disorganized from the ferocious melee with Augereau, disintegrated almost instantly. Despite the sudden attack, General Sacken's troops in the center were able to form square. "Volley's flashed out: horses and riders were sent

sprawling, General Grouchy among them.”<sup>42</sup> The French dragoons rallied, charged and again were repulsed by the Russian squares.<sup>43</sup>

This was only a momentary setback. Murat now led forward General d’Hautpoul’s division of cuirassiers. The cuirassiers swept past Grouchy’s right, breaking the enemy squares, shattering General Sacken’s first line, and overrunning the Russian artillery.<sup>44</sup> D’Hautpoul troops pushed further, into the rear of the Russian Army, but the charge was losing steam. The scattered survivors of the Russian lines began to reform as Platov’s Cossacks began to pursue the now tired and dispersed French Cavalry. The cuirassiers, realizing their predicament, attempted to find their way back through the Russian line. Only two options were available to them: go back directly the way in which they came through the Russian lines, or circle around the entire Russian position and rejoin the French left. The second option would expose the tired and disorganized French cavalry to the lances of Platov’s waiting Cossacks.

Napoleon saw that Murat would have to be cut free and ordered forward the cavalry of the Guard. The guard cavalry smashed through everything, cutting a path for Murat’s trapped cavalry to withdraw. The cost was heavy though. General Dahlmann, Aide de Camp to Napoleon and previous commander of the Chasseurs of the Guard, was killed. General Lepic, commander of the Guard Grenadiers, was wounded.<sup>45</sup> Murat had lost over 1,500 cavalry (either killed or wounded) in the assault. General D’Hautpoul, who commanded the cuirassiers, was killed and General Grouchy was wounded. Additionally, four regimental commanders were lost in what would become known as the greatest cavalry charge of the Napoleonic wars.



Whatever advantage Bennigsen had gained from the destruction of Augereau was lost following the charge of Murat. Both the 4th and 7th Divisions had been placed into the fighting line and used in the pursuit of Augereau. The 14th Division was deployed even earlier in the day to help the Russian left in their fight with Davout.<sup>46</sup> Bennigsen had no reserve left. Although Murat was used earlier than expected, his assault had effectively demoralized the entire Russian line. It also allowed Davout to push his assault forward and secure the critical Kreege Berg heights; at the exact moment Murat's charge was completed. In the words of Wilson, watching these events from Russian Headquarters; "Never was a change more sudden. The victors were yielding the field to the vanquished."<sup>47</sup>

#### Davout's Assault

While Augereau's Corps had strayed to the left, Saint Hilaire's Division had stayed on course and succeeded in attacking Tolstoi's 2nd Division. Friant, with Marulaz's Brigade and Milhaud's Division, had formed to the right of Morand's Division which had come up by way of Mollwitten. Together, they assaulted the Klein Sausgarten-Kreege Berg line being held by Baggovut's Detachment and Kamensky's 14th Division. The fighting was intense. Klein-Sausgarten and the Kreege Berg changed hands several times. Each attack was met with counter-attack.

While Prince Gallitzin was leading his cavalry in a counter-attack against Augereau's corps, twenty squadrons, led by General Korff, smashed into St. Hilaire's Division.<sup>48</sup> Morand, now unsupported, was thrown back to Serpallen while St. Hilaire fled back towards the Bartenstein Road only to be rescued by Klein's Dragoons. With the envelopment seemingly stalled, Friant's Division, with Gudin's in support, forged on.

After a bitter the French fight definitively captured Klein-Sausgarten throwing the Russians back to Auklappen. As Friant and Gudin appeared in the rear of Kreege Berg, the Russian's were forced to evacuate the position, thus allowing Morand and Saint Hilaire to reoccupy the height and retain it for the rest of the day.

Casualties had been heavy and Morand's Division had nearly been exterminated in the fight for the Kreege Berg. Morand was wounded and one of his brigade commanders killed.<sup>49</sup> The 51st Regiment had lost its Eagle, the 61st Regiment's commander was killed, and the 30th Regiment's commander wounded.<sup>50</sup> Additionally three battalion commanders fell on the field.<sup>51</sup> Saint Hilaire's Division did not fare much better. Out of four regiments, two regimental commanders were killed (the 43rd and 55th) and one was wounded (the 36th).<sup>52</sup> Out of eight battalions, two battalion commanders were killed and three wounded.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the 10th Light Infantry Regiment, famous for its actions at Austerlitz, lost its Eagle.<sup>54</sup>

The final capture of the Kreege Berg, which overlooked the entire Russian line, was a decisive moment for the French. As Murat's cavalry charge subsided, Davout's assault pushed into the rear of the Russian Army. Davout placed his corps' heavy artillery on the Kreege Berg heights and began to rake the entire Russian line from the rear.<sup>55</sup> He then ordered Gudin's Division (with Friant supporting) to push towards Auklappen, Bennigsen's Headquarters, and the rear of the Russian Army. Russian officer Davidov states; "Disorder was beginning to grip our troops. The intensified crossfire of the enemy guns ploughed through and blew up everything on the battlefield."<sup>56</sup> The Russian Army was beginning to fall apart.

As Gudin captured the Auklappen farm, Frait's Division seized Kutschitten far to the Russian rear.<sup>57</sup> With Kutschitten seized the direct road to Russia had been cut. As the Russian line began to fold upon itself, Bennigsen knew that the only route for retreat was the road to Königsberg. Following it meant entrapment against the sea and disaster for the Russian Army. Just as the Russian line began to break, however, word reached Bennigsen's headquarters that Lestocq's small Prussian corps had begun to arrive on the battlefield.

#### Lestocq's Counter Attack

Lestocq received orders at 3:30 a.m. 7 February to make haste to Eylau, via Althof, and join with the Russians for battle.<sup>58</sup> During Lestocq's twenty-four mile march to Althof, Ney was encountered, engaged, and eluded on several occasions. In doing so, several units were cut off from the main body. These units became the rear guard under General von Prittwitz, who successfully drew the attention of Ney away from the main body towards Kreuzberg for most of the day. In all, only eight battalions, twenty-eight squadrons and two horse batteries (no more than 6,000 men) finally reached Althof at about 1:00 p.m.<sup>59</sup>

Almost immediately upon Lestocq's arrival, Russian officers came begging for support and relief. The French had already occupied the farm of Auklappen and the village of Kutschitten. Lestocq and Bennigsen agreed that the only hope in saving the Russian Army was by a direct attack on the overextended French right flank. "A well-timed and well-aimed blow could break it, and by one of the remarkable coincidences of history, the very troops that had at Auerstadt inflicted the heaviest blow upon Prussia were now, after an uninterrupted career of victory, to suffer in turn no less severely at the

hands of the little Prussian corps.<sup>60</sup> As Lestocq deployed his troops for this flanking attack, Frint's Division advanced from the village to meet them. With most of Lestocq's troops deployed on the far left flank of the attacking French, Frint was easily pushed back into Kutschitten. Pressing his attack, Lestocq forced the exhausted French division out of the town and through the large woods to the south. Frint was wounded and one of his brigade commanders (Lochet) killed during the fight for Kutschitten.<sup>61</sup> In addition to the over 800 casualties, two of General Frint's six battalion commanders were wounded.<sup>62</sup>

From Kutschitten, the Prussians swept on towards Klein-Sausgarten. Davout ordered Gudin to attack the Prussians coming out of the woods in order to buy time for him to organize a line of defense. "In the glow of the setting sun, ...there was now a fierce musketry and case-shot fire, which lasted about half an hour, and in which the French in their dense masses suffered severely..."<sup>63</sup> Marshall Davout himself had to prevent a general retreat by exhorting his men to die with honor, "Here, the brave will find a glorious death; it is the cowards alone who will go to visit the deserts of Siberia!"<sup>64</sup> Davout massed all the available artillery of the III Corps on the Kreege Berg heights and anchored his right flank in the town of Klein-Sausgarten, turning back the all Prussian attacks. Given the concentrated French artillery on the Kreege-Berg and the general exhaustion of the Lestocq's troops (they had been marching and fighting for twelve to fourteen hours), darkness was allowed to set in without another attack.<sup>65</sup>

About 7:30 p.m., Ney's Corps finally appeared on the battlefield. Picard's Dragoon Brigade and then Lasalle's light brigade lead Ney's advance. At about 8:00 p.m., Ney's, with his leading infantry brigade (General Bellair's) and Lasalles' light cavalry

stormed Schloditten but could not advance further due to the strong Russian right wing.<sup>66</sup> Bennigsen, fearing his route of escape to Königsberg was threatened, ordered General Tutchkov to assault Schloditten with his 5th Division. The attack was repulsed. Later in the evening, Ney, fearing addition pressure and not fully formed for a proper defense, quit the village and retired on Althof.<sup>67</sup> About 10 p.m. all fighting stopped, and the Russians quietly entered Schloditten without opposition.

At 11:00 p.m., Bennigsen held an urgent Council of War to discuss the current situation. "General Bennigsen, informed the circle that he had determined, notwithstanding his success, to fall back upon Koenigsberg, for he had no bread to give the troops, and their ammunition was, expended. He knew his own loss was not less than 20,000 men, and he was not then aware of the full extent of the enemies disorganization."<sup>68</sup> The Russian withdrawal began at midnight. Napoleon fearing the Russian might organize a counterattack against Eylau first thing in the morning ordered preparations for a general retreat. It was only after news of the Russian retreat was confirmed that Napoleon decided to hold his position and claim victory.<sup>69</sup> The engagement was over.

### Results

The battle of Eylau was the bloodiest engagement of the Napoleonic wars thus far. The Grand Army suffered more casualties at Eylau than the battles of Austerlitz, Jena, and Auerstadt combined. The VII Corps was destroyed; the Reserve Cavalry mauled, and both the III and IV Corps were severely damaged. The great loss of senior leadership, from the battalion through division level, completely depleted the Grand Army of a wealth of experience it would never again possess. The battle of Eylau ended

the Grand Army's image of invincibility and was the first major battle fought by Napoleon that did not achieve decisive results. Napoleon had been stopped.

The casualties on both sides were tremendous and will probably never be known with any accuracy. Although estimates of the losses remain uncertain, Bennigsen states in his report to the Tsar, that his losses were 12,000 killed and 7,900 wounded.<sup>70</sup> Napoleon's 58th Bulletin of the French Army admits, "1,000 killed, and 5,700 wounded, including 1,090, who are badly wounded,"<sup>71</sup> The best estimates put the French losses at about 20,000 men, but it is more likely that the French losses approached 25,000-28,000.<sup>72</sup> The Prussians, having only entered the battle with 5,584 lost perhaps 800 in the engagement.<sup>73</sup> The battlefield losses of Jena, Auerstadt, and Austerlitz (combined) were less costly engagements for all involved.

Losses in leadership for the Grand Army were excessive. Over twenty general officers were killed or wounded at Eylau.<sup>74</sup> Six regimental commanders were killed and nine, severely wounded. The losses in battalion commanders had also been high, with over twenty-three being killed or wounded. Additionally, the enemy had captured over seven Regimental Eagles. Because of "the heavy losses of Eagles at Eylau the Emperor ordered the reduction of Eagles per infantry and cavalry regiment to one each in 1808."<sup>75</sup> The losses in the veteran soldier corps were so high (almost one-third of the force engaged) that Napoleon, as he rebuilt his army for the spring campaign, began to rely on larger armies in order to make up for this loss of experience.

For the French, the battle had been a hard fought affair that had produced no significant result equal to their sacrifice. Although the Russian presence in force on the morning of 8 February initially surprised Napoleon, he lost no time in attempting to gain

the initiative. The battle was not intended to be the frontal slugfest it turned into, but instead, a classical envelopment designed to cut Bennigsen off from his lines of communication. The unusually aggressive battle plan of the Russians forced Napoleon to commit his reserve cavalry much earlier in the fight than expected. In an attempt to rescue Augereau and bring to a halt the Russian offensive, Murat's cavalry charge became the pivotal action of the day. It not only stopped what would have been a decisive attack by the Russians, but also wrest the initiative from Bennigsen for the remainder of the battle. When the moment came for the massive French attack to support Davout's turning movement, "French resources were already too exhausted to make it effective."<sup>76</sup> Davout was forced to conduct his envelopment almost entirely unsupported, and when Lestocq's Prussian corps arrived, his envelopment degenerated into a fight for survival. That evening, Napoleon's shattered Army was in no shape to conduct a vigorous pursuit. Bennigsen's Army was allowed to march away unmolested from the battlefield. The war would continue in the spring.

In an attempt to cover the precarious political situation he found himself in after the battle of Eylau, Napoleon began to rely more heavily on propaganda as a means of achieving what he was unable to accomplish on the battlefield. After Eylau, it is a desperate in an attempt to cover his setbacks. Napoleon had no doubt that the Russians had inflicted much harm, both on his Grand Army and his reputation. Soon after the battle, Napoleon offers a separate peace to Prussia in an attempt to gain time to rebuild his Army.<sup>77</sup> This attempt backfired and only increased the resolve of the Russian and Prussian alliance to continue their coalition against Napoleon.<sup>78</sup> Fearing that, after hearing the news of Eylau, Austria might now be inspired to join the war against him,

Napoleon attempts to show the world that events in Poland were indeed going as planned. His 58th Bulletin of the Grand Army emphasizes the fact that the Russian offensive was stopped, the Russian Army severely bled, and the Russians forced to retreat to Konigsburg.<sup>79</sup>

Conversely, this was not the intention of Napoleon's winter campaign. His objective was, as always, the complete destruction of the enemy's Army. Napoleon, for the second time in two months, was reduced to accepting something other than a decisive outcome. With a cost of at least 25,000 casualties, Napoleon had accomplished very little. This was a fact that even Napoleon could not hide from his Grand Army and the enemies of France. The Grand Army's morale was broken. Napoleon, in his 64th Bulletin, said that the sight of the battlefield was enough "to inspire princes with a love of peace and a horror for war."<sup>80</sup> As he toured the battlefield, cries for 'Peace' were heard more often than the usual 'Long live the Emperor.' When Napoleon and his Grand Army marched away from the blood soaked snows of Eylau, they left behind both their dead, and their reputations.

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<sup>1</sup>Boris Megorsky, (August 2000) *Rearguard Action Near Eylau on the day of February 7, 1807*. Napoleonic Wars.Com. (On-line), [www.napoleonicwars.com/battles/eylau1.shtml](http://www.napoleonicwars.com/battles/eylau1.shtml)

<sup>2</sup>Megorsky, *Rearguard Action Near Eylau on the day of February 7, 1807*, (On-line).

<sup>3</sup>Wartenburg, 337.

<sup>4</sup>Wilson, 96.

<sup>5</sup>Petre, 164-165.

<sup>6</sup>Petre, mistakenly refers to the 26th Light as the 46th. Ibid., 166.



<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Digby Smith, Napoleon's Regiments: Battle Histories of the Regiments of the French Army, 1792-1815 (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), 68.

<sup>9</sup>Megorsky, *Rearguard Action Near Eylau on the day of February 7, 1807*, (On-line).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Jean Baptiste Antoine Marcelin baron de Marbot, *The Memoirs of Baron de Marbot* (London, New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), 339.

<sup>12</sup>Wilson, 97-98.

<sup>13</sup>Petre, 169.

<sup>14</sup>Boris V. Megorsky, (August 2000) The Fight for the town of Eylau on the evening of February 7, 1807. Napoleonic Wars.Com. (On-line), [www.napoleonicwars.com/battles/eylau2.shtml](http://www.napoleonicwars.com/battles/eylau2.shtml)

<sup>15</sup>Smith, 50.

<sup>16</sup>Megorsky, *The Fight for the Town of Eylau on the Evening of February 7, 1807* (On-line).

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Petre, 170.

<sup>20</sup>Petre, 171.

<sup>21</sup>Dodge, 479.

<sup>22</sup>Wilson, 197.

<sup>23</sup>Lachouque, 162.

<sup>24</sup>Goltz, 261.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., page 261-262

<sup>26</sup>Wartenburg, 338.

<sup>27</sup>Petre, 178.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 179.

<sup>29</sup>Goltz, 259.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 265-266.

<sup>31</sup>Wilson, 197.

<sup>32</sup>Etling, 536.

<sup>33</sup>Brian Pohanka, "Hurricane of Sword and Horse." *Military History Magazine's Great Battles*, vol. no. 1, December 1986, 41.

<sup>34</sup>Dodge, 481.

<sup>35</sup>Davidov, 37.

<sup>36</sup>Pohanka, 43.

<sup>37</sup>Smith, 64, 99.

<sup>38</sup>Petre, 183.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 183-184.

<sup>40</sup>General Doctorov was wounded during this action.

<sup>41</sup>Chandler, *Campaign's of Napoleon*, 543-544.

<sup>42</sup>Pohanka, 41.

<sup>43</sup>Petre, 185.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Chandler, *Campaign's of Napoleon*, 544.

<sup>46</sup>Petre, 189.

<sup>47</sup>Wilson, 105.

<sup>48</sup>Petre, 190.

<sup>49</sup>Pohanka, 44.

<sup>50</sup>Smith, 107, 119, 84.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 98, 111, 92.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 190.

<sup>55</sup>Davidov, 39.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>57</sup>Petre, 192.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 193.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 194.

<sup>60</sup>Goltz, 273.

<sup>61</sup>Pohanka, 44.

<sup>62</sup>Smith, 52, 73, 117.

<sup>63</sup>Hopfner, 307.

<sup>64</sup>Petre, 198.

<sup>65</sup>Wilson, 259.

<sup>66</sup>This wing had not been very heavily engaged and was the most intact of the entire Russian Army by this time in the battle.

<sup>67</sup>Petre, 199-200.

<sup>68</sup>Wilson, 107-108

<sup>69</sup>Blond, 126.

<sup>70</sup>Wilson, 241.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 197.

<sup>72</sup>Petre, 204.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 196.

<sup>74</sup>Lachouque, 166.

<sup>75</sup>Smith, 16.

<sup>76</sup>Chandler, *The Campaigns Of Napoleon*, 554.

<sup>77</sup>Butterfield, 63.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>79</sup>Dodge, 493.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 489.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNED

The winter campaign in Poland is significant because it reveals an initial weakening of Napoleon's method of waging war and a general wearing down of his war machine, the Grand Army. Most Napoleonic historians consider this time period the zenith of Napoleon's career, both militarily and politically, but the winter campaign of 1806-1807 finds Napoleon's exhausted Army unable to tie down and defeat an inferior Russian force. Even though this army was made up of a higher percentage of veterans and national French troops than any Army Napoleon would ever command again, the Grand Army suffered from a combination of poor enthusiasm for a renewed campaign, extremely bad weather, and an inability to sustain itself by conducting operations in a land without forage. Furthering the complications of winter campaigning, Napoleon's cavalry conducted ineffective reconnaissance due to unfamiliar terrain and lack of proper supplies. His infantry, unable to sustain itself by living off the land and lacking of proper intelligence on enemy locations, was unable to march quickly enough to effectively consolidate on the field of battle. The results of these inefficiencies contributed to what should be considered the first failure of Napoleon's system of warfare. This system would further fail in Napoleon's Russian Campaign of 1812. The winter campaign in Poland gives insight to why this system was imperfect, and ultimately, led to Napoleon's demise.

#### Results

The resulting campaign consisted of a confused series of marches and counter marches as Napoleon constantly tried to trap and surround an enemy that he was unable

to locate. The highly successful Russian rear guard actions and the effectiveness of the Russian Cossacks in January of 1807, kept the Russian Army's intentions and location a mystery to Napoleon. Bagration and De Tolly's rear guard operations ensured Napoleon was unable to engage the Russian main body. This forced Napoleon, in an attempt to trap the retreating Russians, to deploy flanking forces out further than they could reconsolidate with the main body. Thus, when Bennigsen finally turned and faced the French at Eylau, Napoleon was, for the first time in his career, caught off balance.

Although the battle that followed was arguably a victory for Napoleon, it completely stripped the Grand Army of a wealth of experience and leadership. The winter campaign in Poland tarnished Napoleon's image of invincibility and changed beyond recognition his original Grand Army. Never again would Napoleon's Army resemble the force that reigned supreme on the battlefields of Europe during the first years of the Empire. Over twenty general officers were killed or wounded at Eylau. When the casualties of the entire campaign are tallied, and the loss of the leadership in both regimental commanders and battalion commanders is taken into account, there is hardly a formation that escaped some type of significant loss of leadership. It is estimated that Napoleon suffered over 43,000 casualties during the winter campaign from mid December through the first week of February; a period of six weeks. These losses were a severe blow to the veteran core of the Grand Army.

The high losses suffered during the campaign had profound effects on the Grand Army. Napoleon began to rely on more conscripts and an ever-increasing number of foreign troops to fill his depleted ranks. "Four-fifths of the army after Eylau (1807) were recruits of 1806 or 1807."<sup>1</sup> This trend would continue throughout the remainder of the

Napoleonic wars. Napoleon's Grand Army would never have the percentage of veterans (over seventy-five percent) that it had at the start of the winter campaign. The soon to begin war in Spain, the expanding Empire and the constant series of wars on the main continent, would continue to sap the experience level of the Grand Army, Napoleon's main operational army.

To offset the deactivation of the VII Corps, the X Corps under Marshal Lefebvre was created. This formation represented a new type of unit that was to foreshadow a common structure Napoleon was now forced to rely upon. It was comprised of almost entirely foreign troops; two Polish divisions, two divisions of Italians, and contingents of Saxon and Baden troops from the recently conquered territories of Germany.<sup>2</sup> "The appearance of the Grand Army was beginning to undergo a transformation; its composition was slowly becoming international rather than purely French."<sup>3</sup> This reliance on foreign troops would also become a permanent facet of the Grand Army, often causing much resentment and distrust by Napoleon's newly gained 'allies.'

### Lessons Learned

One important lesson learned by Napoleon during the winter campaign in Poland was the ineffectiveness of his logistical system in providing for his troops outside the fertile and well-populated areas of central Europe. The concept of 'living off the land' failed as this campaign led Napoleon's army into a territory that was sparsely settled and less fertile. Discipline in the army began to suffer as the troops fanned-out over wider areas in search of sustenance. To combat this trend, greater reliance was placed upon the makeshift supply columns at the corps level, but these were far too insufficient. Napoleon was forced to transport supplies from his center of operations in Warsaw.

This concept of a center of operations became more and more important to Napoleon in his campaign in Poland. The problem was not so much in finding supplies to feed the army but in transporting these supplies to the field.<sup>4</sup> After the initial troubles in the Pultusk Campaign, Napoleon commissioned a French contractor to purchase wagons. These did not begin to arrive until late January but not in a sufficient enough number to affect the Eylau campaign.<sup>5</sup> Even civilian carts and wagons were confiscated and pressed into service hauling food.<sup>6</sup> By 26 March 1807, Napoleon decreed the creation of three transport battalions for the Grand Army.<sup>7</sup>

These transport battalions and his series of depots at Warsaw (and later Thorn) provided the additional supplies that his army required for the renewed campaign in the spring. The concept of operations bases and transport battalions became an essential part of Napoleonic campaigning for the remainder of the wars. It provided the redundancy required when 'living off the land' failed to provide the troops in the field with what they needed. This concept reveals that Napoleon was willing and able to learn from his mistakes.

The winter campaign also represents the last time Napoleon would conduct a campaign with an operational army of less than 200,000 troops. Rarely, does Napoleon engage any force with less than 120,000 troops on the field of battle. This trend would continue until the defense of France in 1814. Due to the casualties suffered during the winter campaign, and the high loss of veterans, Napoleon began to rely more and more heavily on larger numbers of troops to make up for their poorer quality. By the spring of 1807 "Napoleon had some 324,000 troops in Prussia and Poland, possibly a third of them Confederation of the Rhine and Polish Troops."<sup>8</sup> Napoleon embarked on the Spring



Campaign with the idea that he would completely out-number his opponent. This tactic was very effective and large, almost unmanageable, armies became the norm for the Grand Army. Most battles from this time period forward would involve hundreds of thousands of troops engaged for days at a time. Napoleon's concept of larger armies would change the face of battle forever.

Another important lesson from the winter campaign in Poland was that two very important Russian Army Officers learned how to fight Napoleon, Generals Bagration and De Tolly. It can be argued that the lessons learned by both Bagration and De Tolly would pay huge dividends, both for Bennigsen in 1807 and for the Tsar himself in 1812, when both of these individuals would command the separate wings of the Russian Army. Employing what could be seen as the roots of a 'Fabian Strategy,' the Russian advance guard would attack the isolated detachments of Napoleon's Army, then withdraw as a rear guard of the main army. By constantly fighting a series of rear guard actions, these generals began to wear down an already tired French Army, and forced Napoleon to constantly overextend in the hope of tying down and engaging the Russian main body. This tactic would again be seen in Russia in 1812 with even more disastrous results for Napoleon.

The winter campaign in Poland damaged Napoleon's image of invincibility. The battle of Eylau, although not lost, was the first check that Napoleon faced on the field of battle. Neither Napoleon's later victory at Friedland, nor the pageantry of the Treaty of Tilsit, could hide the fact the Napoleon had been stopped. The high rate of casualties suffered by both his officers and veterans changed the composition of the Grand Army forever. His logistical problems caused what should be considered the first failure of the

Napoleonic system of warfare, a system that reigned supreme in the early days of the Empire. Napoleon's adjustments to both his logistical and manpower problems, in addition to the enemies of France finding new and successful way of engaging Napoleon, should be seen as the beginning of the end of Napoleon's supremacy on the battlefield. The winter campaign can be considered a precursor to the many problems he would encounter in Russian in 1812. Not until 1813, after the Russian Campaign, would Napoleon again be as vulnerable to total disaster as what he was after Eylau. Never again would his army resemble the force that it was before the bloody winter campaign in Poland. By 1807, the first tarnishes had indeed appeared on Napoleon's Imperial Eagles.

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<sup>1</sup>Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1983), 52.

<sup>2</sup>Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*, 560.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Butterfield, 89.

<sup>5</sup>Ernest Picard, and Louis Tuetey, *Unpublished Correspondence of Napoleon I, Vol 1, 1804-1807* (New York: Duffield and Company, 1913), 472.

<sup>6</sup>Butterfield, 89.

<sup>7</sup>Picard and Tully, 517.

<sup>8</sup>Etling, 61.

## APPENDIX A

### FRENCH ORDER OF BATTLE

#### **Commander in Chief – The Emperor Napoleon** **Chief of Staff – Marshal Berthier**

The Imperial Guard – Marshal Bessieres

Infantry of the Guard – General Souley

1st and 2nd Regiments (2 BN each) Grenadiers a Pied

1st and 2nd Regiments (2 BN each) Chasseurs a Pied

Cavalry of the Guard – General Walther

Grenadiers a Cheval

Chasseurs a Cheval (w/Mameluke Squadron)

Artillery of the Guard – General of Brigade Couin

Three Companies of Guard Horse Artillery

#### **I Corps – Marshal Bernadotte**

1st Division – General Dupont

9th Light Regiment (3 BNs)

32nd Line Regiment (2 BNs)

96th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

1 Foot and 1 Horse Artillery Battery  
assigned

2nd Division – General Rivaud

8th Light Regiment (2 BNs)

45th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

54th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

1 Foot and 1 Horse Artillery Battery  
assigned

#### **III Corps – Marshall Davout**

1st Division – General Morand

13th Light Regiment (2 BNs)

17th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

30th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

51st Line Regiment (3 BNs)

61st Line Regiment (3 BNs)

1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned

2nd Division – General Friant

33rd Line Regiment (2 BNs)

48th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

108th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

111th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned

3rd Division – General Drouet

27th Light Regiment (2 BNs)

94th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

95th Line Regiment (3 BNs)

1 Foot and 1 Horse Artillery Battery  
assigned

Corps Troops

1 Heavy Battery

1 Bridging Company

1 Combat Engineer Company

Light Cavalry Division – General Tilly

2nd Regiment Hussars

4th Regiment Hussars

5th Regiment Chasseurs

3rd Division – General Gudin

12th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

21st Line Regiment (3 BNs)

25th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

85th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned

Corps Troops

2 Heavy Batteries

1 Combat Engineer Company

Light Cavalry Brigade – General Marulez

1st Regiment Chasseurs

2nd Regiment Chasseurs

12th Regiment Chasseurs

#### **IV Corps – Marshal Soult**

##### 1st Division – General Saint-Hilare

10th Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
35th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
43rd Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
55th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned

##### 2nd Division – General Leval

24th Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
4th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
28th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
46th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
57th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned

##### 3rd Division – General Legrand

26th Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
Trailleurs Corse (1 BN)

##### Trailleurs du Po (1 BN)

18th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
75th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
1 Foot and 1 Horse Artillery Battery assigned  
Corps Troops  
2 Heavy Batteries  
1 Bridging Company  
1 Combat Engineer Company  
Light Cavalry Brigade – General Guyot  
8th Regiment Hussars  
22nd Regiment Chasseurs  
11th Regiment Chasseurs  
16th Regiment Chasseurs  
1 Horse Artillery Battery assigned

#### **V Corps – Marshal Lannes**

##### 1st Division – General Suchet

17th Light Regiment (3 BNs)  
34th Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
40th Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
64th Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
88th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
1 Foot and 1 Horse Artillery Battery assigned

##### 2nd Division – General Gazan

21st Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
28th Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
100th Line Regiment (3 BNs)

##### 103rd Line Regiment (3 BNs)

1 Foot and Horse Artillery Battery assigned  
3rd Division – General Legrand  
Corps Troops  
2 Heavy Batteries  
1 Bridging Company  
1 Combat Engineer Company  
Light Cavalry Brigade – General Treliard  
9th Regiment Hussars  
10th Regiment Hussars  
21st Regiment Chasseurs

#### **VI Corps – Marshal Ney**

##### 1st Division – General Marchand

6th Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
39th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
69th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
76th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
2nd Division – General Gardanne

25th Light Regiment (2 BNs)  
50th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
59th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
27th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

##### Corps Troops

1 Heavy, 1 Foot and 1 Horse Battery  
1 Combat Engineer Company  
Light Cavalry Brigade – General Colbert  
3rd Regiment Hussars  
10th Regiment Chasseurs

**VII Corps – Marshal Augereau**

1st Division – General Desjardin  
16th Light Regiment (4 BNs)  
14th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
44th Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
105th Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned  
2<sup>nd</sup> Division – General Heudelet  
7th Light Regiment (3 BNs)  
24th Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
63rd Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
1 Foot Artillery Battery assigned

**Reserve Cavalry – Marshal Murat**

Light Division – General Lasalle  
5th Regiment Hussars  
7th Regiment Hussars  
1st Regiment Hussars  
13th Regiment Chasseurs  
1st Dragoon Division – General Klein  
1st Regiment Dragoons  
2nd Regiment Dragoons  
14th Regiment Dragoons  
4th Regiment Dragoons  
Half Battery Horse Artillery (3 Guns)  
2nd Dragoon Division – General  
Grouchy  
3rd Regiment Dragoons  
6th Regiment Dragoons  
10th Regiment Dragoons  
11th Regiment Dragoons  
13th Regiment Dragoons  
22nd Regiment Dragoons  
Half Battery Horse Artillery (3 Guns)

Corps Troops  
2 Heavy Batteries  
1 Bridging Company  
Light Cavalry Brigade – General  
Dourosnel  
7th Regiment Chasseurs  
20th Regiment Chasseurs  
1 Horse Artillery Battery assigned

3rd Dragoon Division – General  
Beaumont (Later Milhaud)  
5th Regiment Dragoons  
12th Regiment Dragoons  
8th Regiment Dragoons  
16th Regiment Dragoons  
9th Regiment Dragoons  
21st Regiment Dragoons  
Half Battery Horse Artillery (3 Guns)  
5th Dragoon Division – General Becker  
15th Regiment Dragoons  
25th Regiment Dragoons  
13th Regiment Dragoons  
22nd Regiment Dragoons  
Half Battery Horse Artillery (3 Guns)  
2nd Heavy Cavalry Division – General  
Hautpoul  
10th Cuirassiers  
11th Cuirassiers  
5th Cuirassiers  
1st Cuirassiers  
Half Battery Horse Artillery (3 Guns)

## APPENDIX B

### THE RUSSIAN AND PRUSSIAN ORDER OF BATTLE

#### **1st Army: General of Cavalry von Bennigsen**

**(1 December - 62,250 men = 2,500 cavalry, 49,500 infantry, 276 guns)**

##### **2nd Division: General Tolstoi**

2nd Division 12pdr Foot Battery

##### **Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor Koshin**

Emperior (Leibguard) Cuirassiers

Kargopol Dragoons

Isoum Hussars

Ilovata IX Cossacks

Isromov II Cossacks

2nd Division 6pdr Horse Battery

##### **Aide: Generalmajor Mazovskoi,**

Pavlov Grenadier Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Rostov Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

St. Petersburg Grenadier Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Ielets Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Generalmajor Count Lieven

1st Jager Regiment

20th Jager Regiment

##### **4th Division: General Prince Galitzin**

4th Division 12pdr Foot Battery

##### **Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor Baron Korf**

St. George Cuirassiers

Pskov Dragoons

Polish Uhlans

Grekov IX Cossacks

Grekov XVIII Cossacks

4th Division 6pdr Horse Battery

##### **3rd Division: General Baron Sacken I**

3rd Division 12pdr Foot Battery

##### **Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor Count Pahlen**

Little Russia Cuirassiers

Kourland Dragoons

Soum Hussars

Ilovats X Cossacks

Papuzin Cossacks

3rd Division 6pdr Horse Battery

##### **Aide: Generalmajor Tcherbatov**

Tauride Grenadier Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Lithuanian Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Kaporsk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Mourmansk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Tchernigov Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Dnieper Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

21st Jager Regiment

##### **Aide: Generalmajor Samov**

Toula Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Tenguin Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Navaguinsk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Tobolsk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

##### **Generalmajor Barclay de Tolly**

Polotsk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Kostroma Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

3rd Jager Regiment

**6th Division: General Sedmoratzki**

6th Division 12pdr Foot Battery

**Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor Lvov**

Iekaterinoslav Cuirassiers

Kiev Dragoons

Tartar Uhlans

Alexandrov Hussars

Bopov V Cossacks

6th Division Horse Battery

**Aide: Generalmajor Rachmanov**

Vilna Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Nisov Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Revel Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Volhynia Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Generalmajor Baggavout

Staroskol Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

4th Jager Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

**2nd Army: General of Infantry Buxhowden**

**(5 December - 49,370 men = 10,500 cavalry, 39,000 infantry, 228 guns)\*\*\***

**5th Division: General Tutchkov**

5th Division 12pdr Foot Battery

**Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor**

**Sacken II**

Riga Dragoons

Kazan Dragoons

Lithuanian Uhlans

Elisabethgrad Hussars

Gordejov Cossacks

5th Division 6pdr Horse Battery

**Aide: Generalmajor Leontiev**

Sewsk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Kaluga Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Perm Musketeer Regiment

Mohilev Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

24th Jager Regiment

25th Jager Regiment

**7th Division: General Docturov**

7th Division 12pdr Foot Battery

**Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor**

**Czaplitz**

Moscow Dragoons

Inkermanland Dragoons

Pavlovgrad Hussars

Malakov Cossacks

Andronov Cossacks

7th Division 6pdr Horse Battery

**Aide: Generalmajor Zapolskoi**

Iekaterinoslav Grenadier Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Moscow Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Vladimir Musketeer Regiment

Voronej Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Azov Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Generalmajor Markov

Pskov Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

5th Jager Regiment

**8th Division: General Essen III**

8th Division 12pdr Foot Battery

**Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor Manteuffel**

St. Petersburg Dragoons

Livonia Dragoons

Olviopol Hussars

Kieselev Cossacks

Ensojev Cossacks

8th Division 6pdr Horse Battery

**Aide: Generalmajor ?**

*Moscow Grenadier Regiment*

*Viborg Musketeer Regiment*

Schusselburg Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Old Ingermanland Musketeer Regiment

Polodsk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Archangle Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

*7th Jager Regiment*

**14th Division: General Anrepp**

14th Division 12pdr Foot Battery

**Cavalry Brigade: Generalmajor Chepelev**

Finland Dragoons

Mitau Dragoons

Grodno Hussars

**Aide: Generalmajor Kamenskoi**

Bieloserk Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Riazan Musketeer Regiment

Ouglich Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

Sophia Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)

23rd Jager Regiment

26th Jager Regiment

\*\*\* *Regiments italicized suffered extremely heavy losses at Austerlitz (including almost all Battalion Guns) and had not had those losses made whole.*

**Prussians Corps Commander: Von L'Estocq**

**Avant-garde : Generalmajor Von Rembow**

Bergen Fusilier Battalion

Wadenitz Fusilier Battalion

Rembow Fusilier Battalion

Chachtmeyer Fusilier Battalion

Bülow Fusilier Battalion

Stutterheim Fusilier Battalion

**Cavalry Brigade: Von Kall**

Prittwitz Hussars

Auer Dragoons

Towarczy Lancers

**1st Division: General Von Blöz**

Scöning Infantry Regiment

Rüchel Infantry Regiment

Beffer Infantry Regiment

Maffow Grenadier Battalion

Schlieffen Grenadier Battalion

Fabeky Grenadier Battalion

**2nd Division: General Von Dierike**

Blöz Infantry Regiment

Rüts Infantry Regiment

Brann Grenadier Battalion

**Cavalry Division: General Von Röhler**

Rouquette Dragoons

Sebed Dragoons

Baczo Dragoons

Wagenfeld Cuirassiers

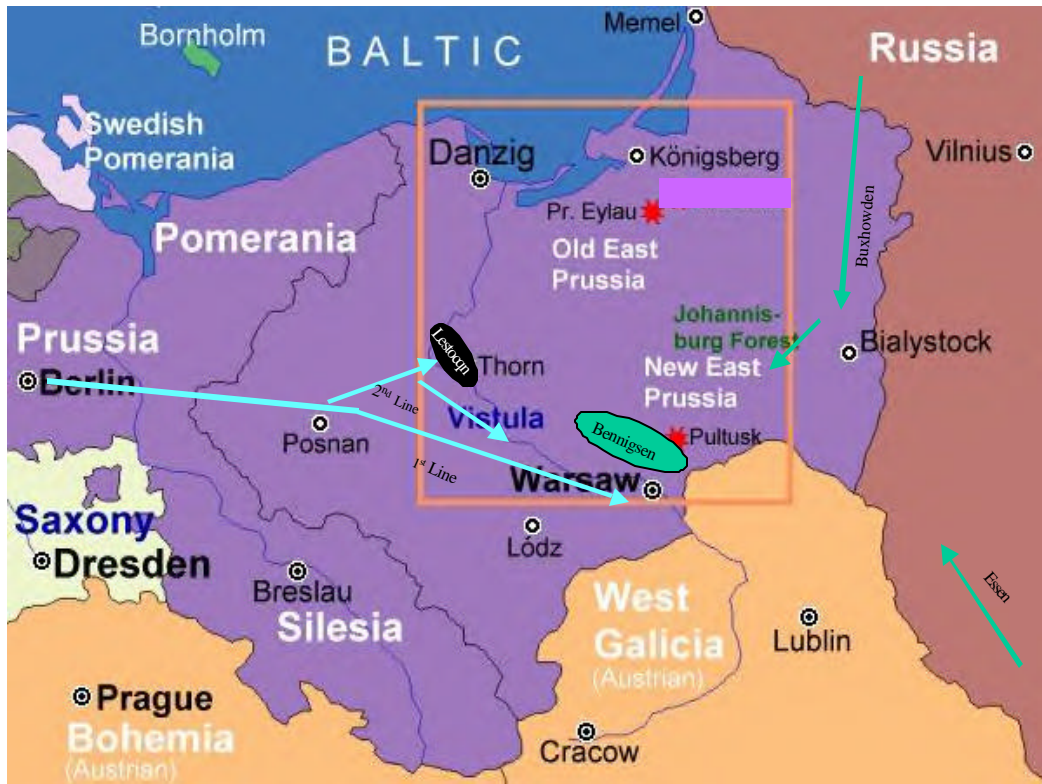
**Artillery: General Hartmann**

Horse Batteries Numbers 7,8,9,10,13

Heavy Batteries Numbers 34,35,37,39



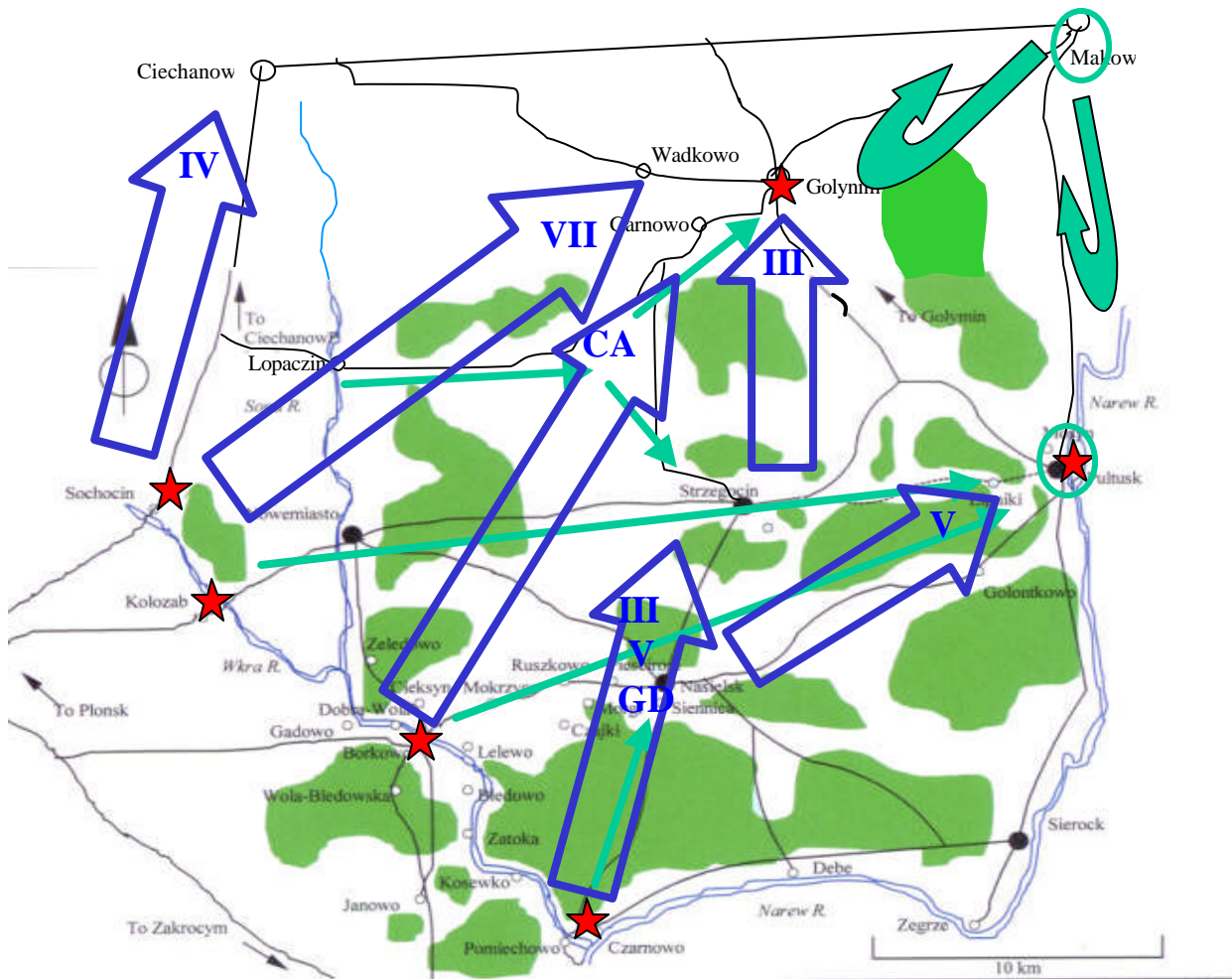
## ADVANCE TO THE VISTULA MAP



(Base map of northeastern Europe from [www.napoleon.musketwars.com](http://www.napoleon.musketwars.com))

## APPENDIX D

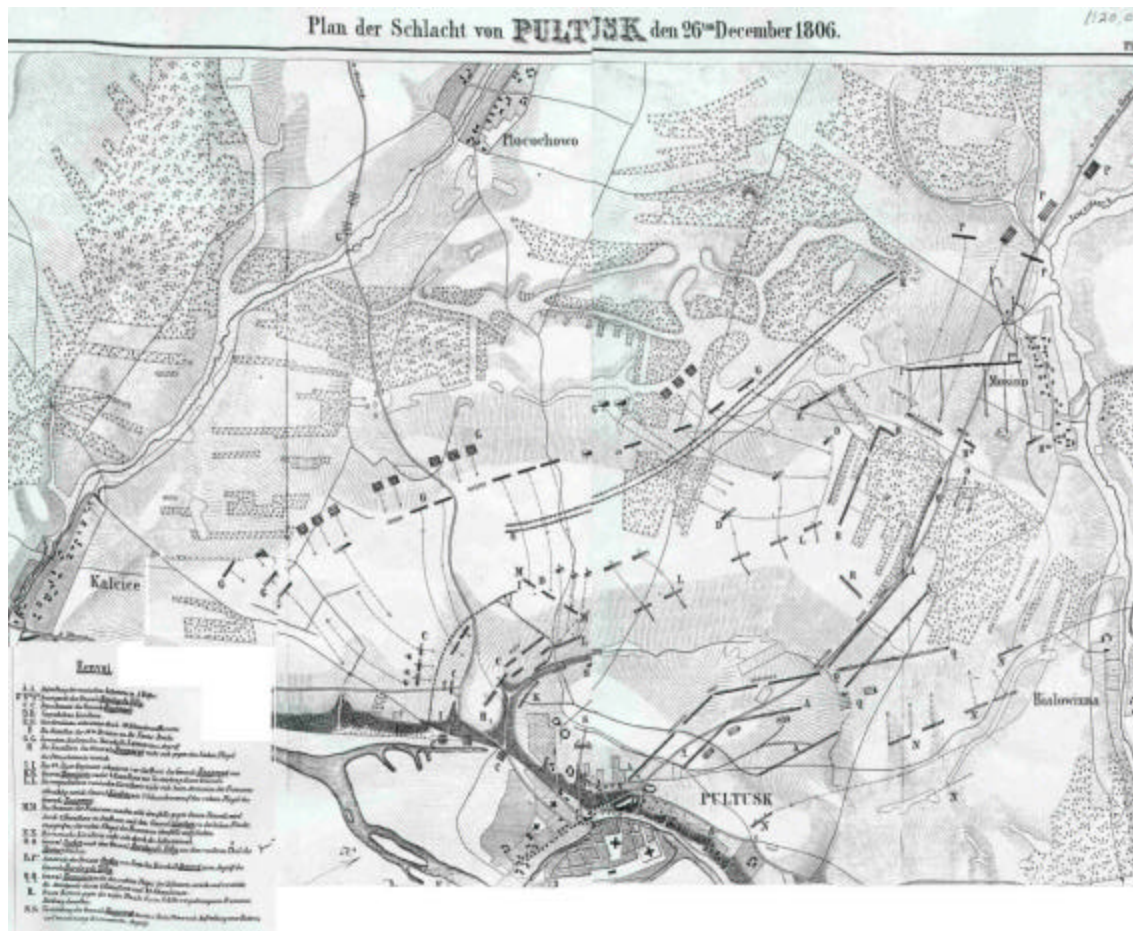
### CAMPAIGN OF PULTUSK OPERATIONAL MAP



Base map of Poland from [www.napoleon-series.org](http://www.napoleon-series.org).

## APPENDIX E

### BATTLE OF PULTUSK: MAP AND ORDER OF BATTLE



## Russian Order of Battle

Commander: General Bennigsen

### **Center Cavalry: General Koshin**

Emperor (Lifeguard) Cuirassiers

Kargopol Dragoons

Isoum Hussars

Iekaterinoslav Cuirassiers

Kiev Dragoons

Alexandrov Hussars

### **Cossacks:**

Ilovats IX Cossacks

Isromov II Cossacks

Papov V Cossacks

### **Left Detachment: General Baggavut**

Staroskol Musketeer (w/ 6guns)

4th Jager

Ielets Musketeer (w/ 6 guns) – *{from 2nd Division that morning}*

Horse Tartars

6th Division's Heavy Battery (12 guns)

### **Right Detachment: General De Tolly**

Tenguin Musketeer (*guns lost in retreat*)

3rd Jager

1st Jager {from 2<sup>nd</sup> Division}

20th Jager {from 2<sup>nd</sup> Division}

Polish Lancers

4th Division's Heavy Battery (12 Guns)

½ of 4th Divisions Horse Guns (6 Guns) – *{half of battery lost at Kolozab}*

### **1st Line:**

#### **2nd Division: General Tolstoi**

Pavlov Grenadier (w/ 4 guns)

Rostov Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

St. Petersburg Grenadier (w/ 4 guns)

2nd Division's Heavy Battery (10 guns)

2nd Division Horse Battery (12 guns)

#### **3rd Division: General Sacken**

Lithuanian Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

Kaporsk Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

Mourmansk Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

Tchernigov Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

3rd Division Heavy Battery (12 guns)

**Reserve:**

**4th Division: General Samov** (*Galitzen at Golymin with rest of Division*)

Toula Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

Rowogin Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

Tobolsk Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

**6th Division: General Sedmoratzki**

Vilna Musketeer (w/ 6 guns)

Nisov Musketeer (w/ 6 guns)

Revel Musketeer (w/ 6 guns)

Volhynia Musketeer (w/ 6 guns)

6th Division Horse Battery (12 guns)

**French Order Of Battle**

**V Corps – Marshal Lannes**

**Advance Guard – General Claparede**

17th Light Regiment (3 BNs)

w/ Light Cavalry Brigade – General Treliard

9th Regiment Hussars

10th Regiment Hussars

21st Regiment Chasseurs

**1st Division – General Suchet**

34th Line Regiment (3 BNs)

64th Line Regiment (3 BNs)

88th Line Regiment (2 BNs)

1/2 Horse Artillery Battery (4 guns)

**2nd Division – General Gazan\*\*\***

100th Line Regiment (3 BNs)

103rd Line Regiment (3 BNs)

40th Line Regiment (3 BNs) *{from 1st Division}*

1/2 Horse Artillery Battery (4 guns)

**Reserve – General Graindorge**

21st Light Regiment (2 BNs)

**Attached 5th Dragoon Division – General Beker**

13th Dragoon Regiment

22nd Dragoon Regiment

15th Dragoon Regiment

25th Dragoon Regiment

### **III Corps/ 3rd Division – General D’Aultane**

12th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
21st Line Regiment (3 BNs)  
25th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
85th Line Regiment (2 BNs)  
1/2 Horse Artillery Battery (4 guns)

\*\*\* 28th Light Regiment (2 BNs) with advancing Corps Artillery

### **Russian Order of Battle for Golymin**

#### **Commander: General Prince Gallitsin**

**Detachment** {from 4th Division}

Kostroma Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

Polotsk Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

#### **Cavalry: General Korf** {from 4th Division}

St. George Cuirassiers

Pskov Dragoon Regiment

Grekov IX Cossacks

Grekov XVIII Cossacks

#### **General Doctorov’s Rear Guard** {from 7th Division}

Moscow Musketeer (w/ 6 guns)

Moscow Dragoon Regiment

7th Division’s Horse Artillery (12 guns)

#### **General Tcherbatow’s Detachment** {from 3rd Division}

Tauride Grenadier (w/ 4 guns)

Dneiper Musketeer (w/ 4 guns)

#### **General Pahlen’s Detachment** {from 3rd Division}

Little Russia Curassiers

Soum Hussars

21st Jagers



## APPENDIX F

### CAMPAIGN OF EYLAU OPERATIONAL MAPS

#### Russian Advance



## Napoleon's Counterattack



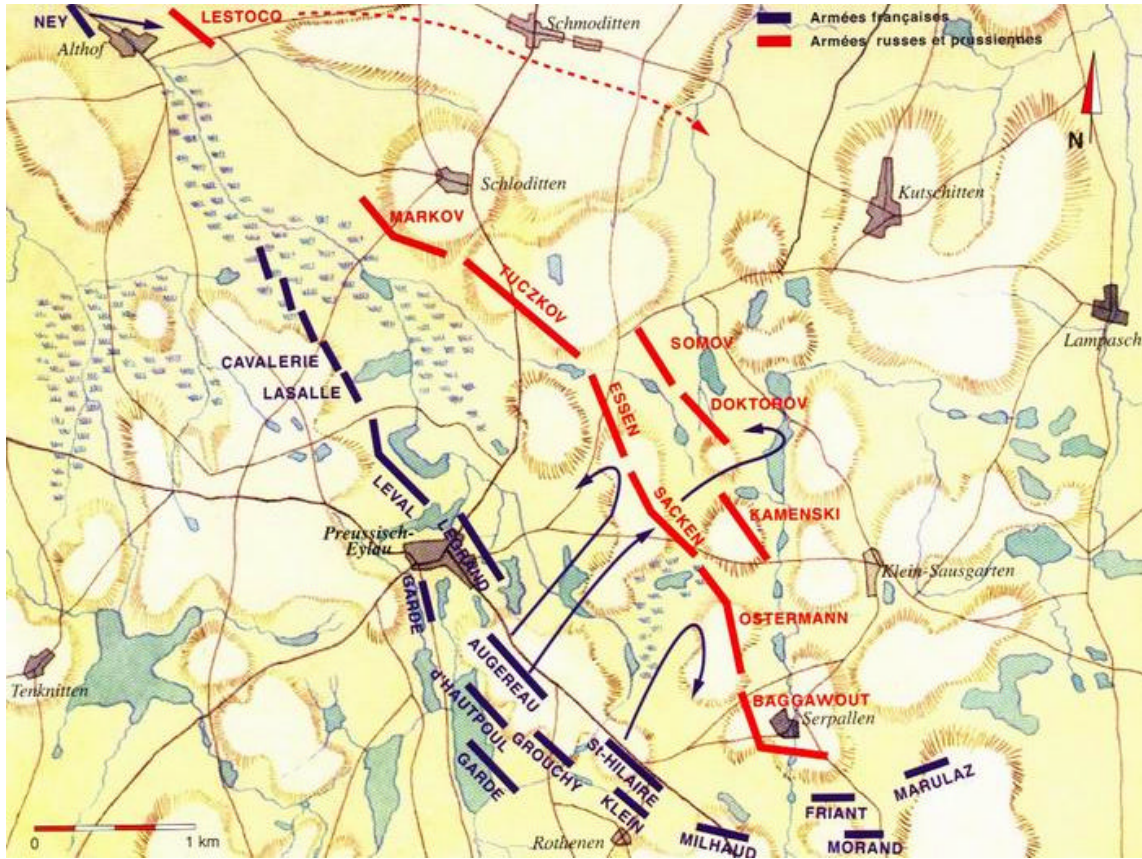
Map from the Command and General Staff College, Combat Studies Institute.



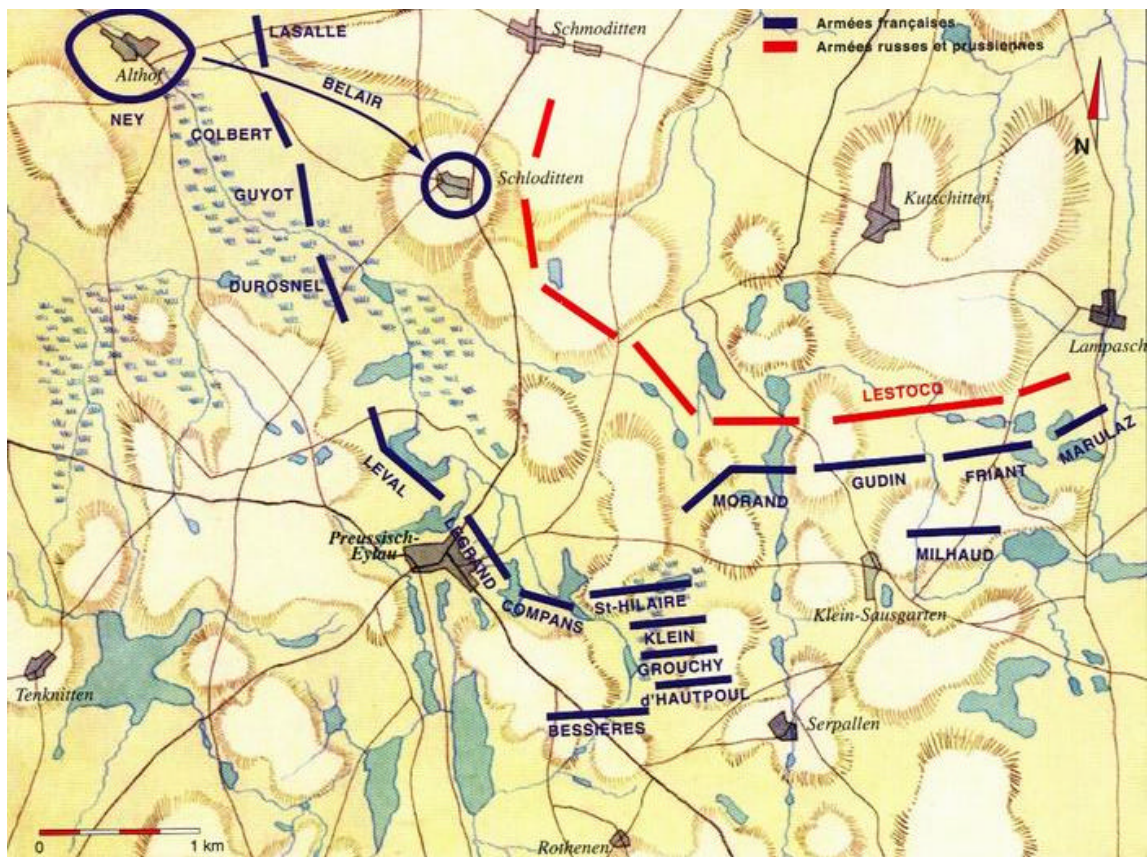
## APPENDIX G

### BATTLE OF EYLAU: MAPS AND ORDER OF BATTLE

#### Morning Battle



## Afternoon Battle



## Russian Order of Battle

### **Army Commander: General Bennigsen**

Aide-de-Camp: General Bagration

### **Right Wing: General Tuchkov**

**5th Division:** Generalmajor Leontiev

Sewsk Musketeer Regiment

Perm Musketeer Regiment

Mohilev Musketeer Regiment

24th Jager Regiment

25th Jager Regiment

**Markov's Detachment:** Generalmajor Markov

Azov Musketeer Regiment

Pskov Musketeer Regiment

5th Jager Regiment

**Grand Battery of the Right:** Approximately 60 Cannon

Four each Prussian Batteries

Two each Russian Heavy Batteries

**Right Wing Cavalry:** Generalmajor Korf

St. George Cuirassiers

Iekaterinoslav Cuirassiers

Soum Hussars

Pskov Dragoons

Kiev Dragoons

Riga Dragoons

Kazan Dragoons

Livonia Dragoons

Malakov Cossacks

Kieselev Cossacks

### **Center Wing: General Sacken**

**3rd Division:** Generalmajor Tcherbatov

Tauride Grenadier Regiment

Lithuanian Musketeer Regiment

Kaporsk Musketeer Regiment

Mourmansk Musketeer Regiment

Tchernigov Musketeer Regiment

Dnieper Musketeer Regiment

21st Jager Regiment

**8th Division:** General Essen  
 Moscow Grenadier Regiment  
 Schusselburg Musketeer Regiment  
 Old Ingermanland Musketeer Regiment  
 Polodsk Musketeer Regiment  
 Archangle Musketeer Regiment  
 7th Jager Regiment  
**Grand Battery of the Center:** Approximately 72 Cannon  
 Six each Russian Heavy Batteries  
 Protected by 20th Jager Regiment  
**Center Wing Cavalry:** Prince Galitzin  
 Emperior (Leibguard) Cuirassiers  
 Elisabethgrad Hussars  
 Pavlovgrad Hussars  
 Kargopol Dragoons  
 Inkermanland Dragoons  
 St. Petersburg Dragoons  
 Kieselev Cossacks  
 Andronov Cossacks

**Left Wing: General Tolstoi**

**2nd Division:** Generalmajor Mazovskoi  
 Pavlov Grenadier Regiment  
 Rostov Musketeer Regiment  
 St. Petersburg Grenadier Regiment  
 Ielets Musketeer Regiment  
**Detachment Baggavout:** Generalmajor Baggavout  
 Staroskol Musketeer Regiment  
 Kostroma Musketeer Regiment  
 3rd Jager Regiment  
 4th Jager Regiment  
 Isoum Hussars  
 Alexandrov Hussars  
 Olviopol Hussars  
 Polish Uhlans  
 Two each Russian Light Batteries  
**14th Division:** Generalmajor Kamenskoi  
 Riazan Musketeer Regiment  
 Ouglich Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)  
 Sophia Musketeer Regiment (w/ 6 guns)  
 23rd Jager Regiment  
 26th Jager Regiment  
**Grand Battery of the Left:** Approximately 42 Cannon  
 Three each Russian Heavy Batteries

**Left Wing Cavalry:** Generalmajor Pahlen  
 Little Russia Cuirassiers  
 Kourland Dragoons  
 Moscow Dragoons

Finland Dragoons  
Mitau Dragoons

**Reserve: General Dochterov**

**7th Division:** Generalmajor Zapolskoi

Iekaterinoslav Grenadier Regiment

Moscow Musketeer Regiment

Vladimir Musketeer Regiment

Voronej Musketeer Regiment

**4th Division:** Generalmajor Sacken

Toula Musketeer Regiment

Tenguin Musketeer Regiment

Navaguinsk Musketeer Regiment

Tobolsk Musketeer Regiment

**Reserve Horse Artillery Pool:** Approximately 60 Cannon

Six each Russian Horse Batteries

**Cossacks: Altman Platov**

Ilovata IX Cossacks

Isromov II Cossacks

Ilovats X Cossacks

Papuzin Cossacks

Grekov IX Cossacks

Grekov XVIII Cossacks

**Prussians Corps: General Lestocq**

**Advance Guard:**

Auer Dragoons

One each Horse Battery

**1st Division:** General Rembow

Towarczy Lancers

Viborg Musketeer Regiment (from 8<sup>th</sup> Division)

Sconing Infantry Regiment

½ Battery Horse Artillery

**2nd Division:** General Dierike

Schlieffen Grenadier Battalion

Fabeky Grenadier Battalion

Stutterheim Fusilier Battalion

Rüchel Infantry Regiment

Baczo Dragoons

Wagenfeld Cuirassiers

½ Battery Horse Artillery

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While the actions of the French III Corps at Czarnowo and Nasielsk are thoroughly covered, few histories even mention the activity of the French cavalry operating between the III and VII Corps. This article provides the story of the action at Borkowo and helps form an important part in the overall understanding of the operations leading up to the battles of Golymin and Pultusk. Additionally, the articles on the actions at Sochocin and Kolozab reveal the strategic significance of Augereau's actions in exposing the Russian right. These articles provide the detail necessary in order to fully understand the French operations as a whole on the Narew and Wkra in December 1806.

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This is a rare document translated to English. Report shows the optimism of the Russians on their offensive just hours before they receive the news of Napoleon's trap.

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